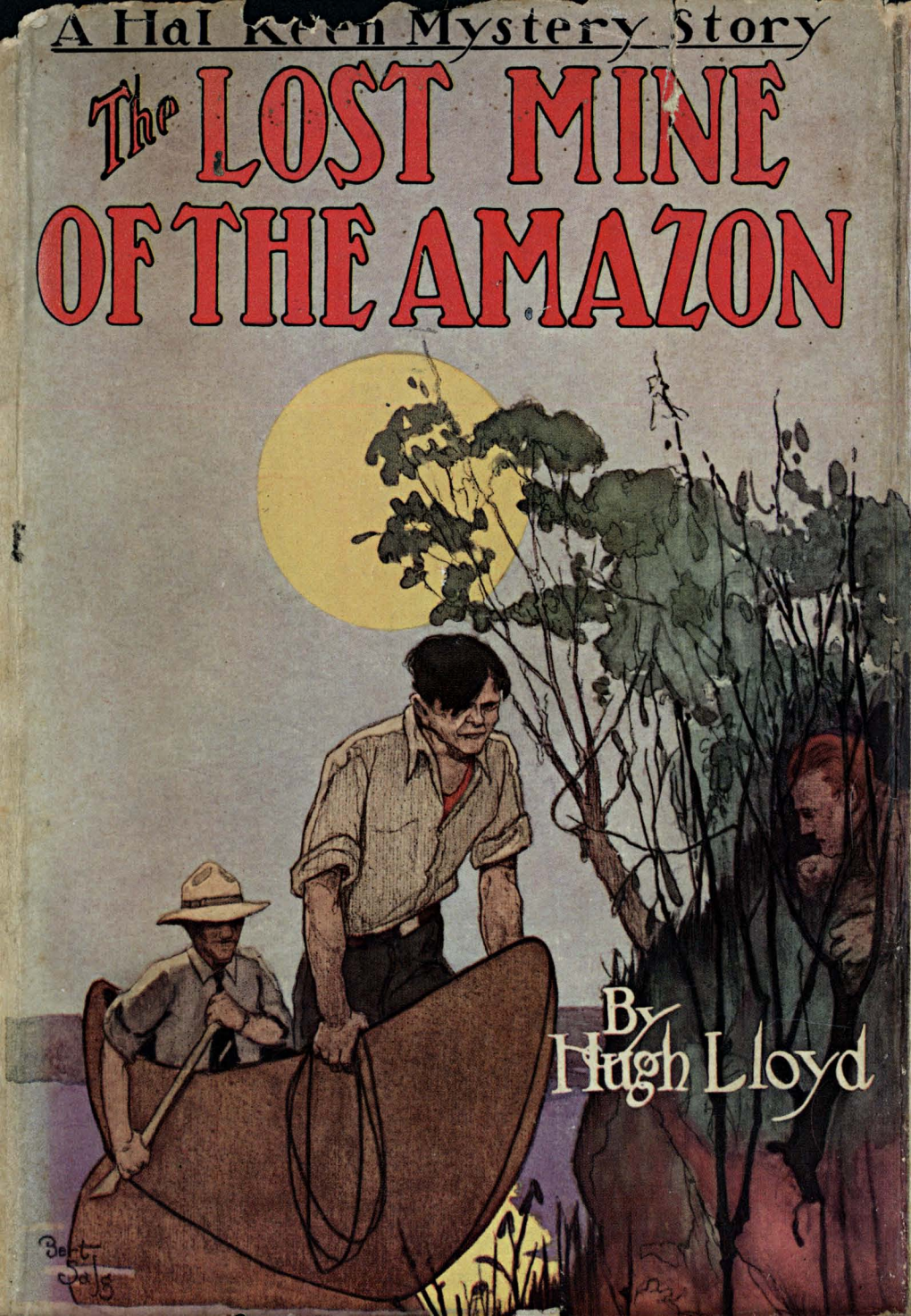
A Hal Keen Mystery Story

The LOST MINE OF THE AMAZON



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A Hal Keen Mystery Story

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THE LOST MINE OF THE AMAZON

HUGH LLOYD

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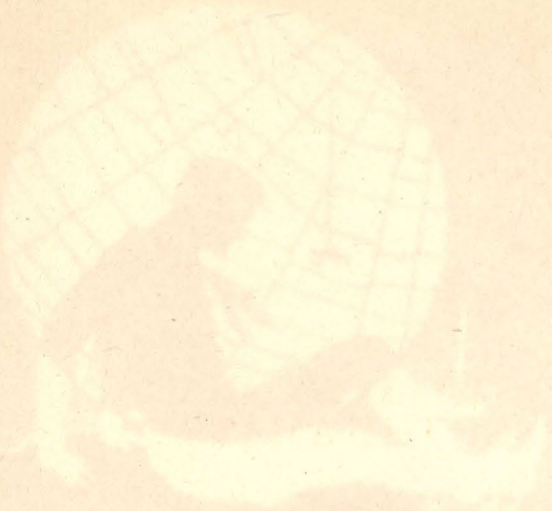

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THE LOST MINE OF THE AMAZON

SUDDENLY THE MAN'S HAND DARTED DOWN TOWARD THE SLEEPING MAN'S POCKET.

The Lost Mine of the Amazon *Frontispiece (Page 1)*

A HAL KEEN MYSTERY STORY

THE LOST MINE OF THE AMAZON

By

HUGH LLOYD

AUTHOR OF
THE COPPERHEAD TRAIL MYSTERY
THE HERMIT OF GORDON'S CREEK
THE DOOM OF STARK HOUSE, ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY

BERT SALG

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THE LOST MINE OF THE AMAZON

CHAPTER I

A RIDDLE

HAL lay rigid in his deck chair and watched from under half-closed lids. The dapper little man came toward them soundlessly and approached Denis Keen's chair with all the slinking agility of a cat. Suddenly his hand darted down toward the sleeping man's pocket.

Hal leaped up in a flash, grasping the little man's pudgy wrist.

"What's the idea, huh? Whose pocket do you think . . ."

Denis Keen awakened with a start.

"Hal—Señor Goncalves!" he interposed. "Why, what's the fuss, eh?"

"Fuss enough," said Hal angrily. "The fine Señor Goncalves has turned pickpocket I

guess. I saw him reaching down to your pocket and . . ."

"But you are mistaken," protested the dapper Brazilian. His voice, aggrieved and sullen, suddenly resumed its usual purr. "See, gentlemen?" he said with a note of triumph.

Hal and his uncle followed the man's fluttering hand and saw that he was pointing toward a magazine thrust down between the canvas covering and the woodwork of Denis Keen's deck chair.

"I came to get that—to have something to read," purred the Señor. He turned to Hal with that same triumphant manner. "Being short of chairs, I have shared this one with your uncle. This afternoon I have sat in it and read the magazine. I leave it there at dinner and now I come to get it—so?"

"Which is all true," said Denis Keen, getting to his feet. "I'm terribly sorry that my nephew put such a construction on your actions, Señor Goncalves—terribly sorry. But he didn't know about our sharing chairs and that accounts for it."

Hal's smile was all contrition. He shrugged

his broad shoulders and gave the Brazilian a firm, hearty handclasp.

"My error, Goncalves. You see, I don't know the arrangements on this scow yet. I've been knocking around below decks ever since we left *Para*—talking to the crew and all that sort of thing. It's my first experience in Amazon, South America." He laughed. "I just came up a little while ago and after snooping around found Unk asleep in that chair so I just flopped into the vacant one next. Then you came along—well, I'm sorry."

Señor Goncalves moved off into the shadows of the upper deck, smiling and content. The small echo of his purring goodnight lingered on the breeze, bespeaking the good will with which he parted from his new-found American friends.

Hal and his uncle had again settled themselves in the deck chairs and for a long time after the Brazilian had gone they sat in silence. The boat ploughed on through the softly swishing Amazon and there was no other sound save the throbbing of the engines below.

"Well, Hal, 'all's well that ends well,' eh?" said Denis Keen, stifling a yawn. "I'm mighty

glad that our dapper Señor took our apologies and parted in a friendly spirit. It goes to prove how necessary it is for you to curb that reckless reasoning of yours."

Hal shifted his lanky legs and ran his fingers through a mass of curly red hair. His freckled face was unusually grave as he turned to his uncle.

"Gosh, you didn't fall for that, did you?" he asked with not a little surprise.

"Why not—you were in the wrong! As I said before—your recklessness, Hal . . ."

"Unk, that wasn't recklessness; that was just plain cautiousness. If you had seen the way he came sliding and slinking toward you in the darkness, you wouldn't be so touched by the little tussle I gave him. People don't sneak around looking for mislaid magazines—they stamp around and yell like the dickens. I know I do. Besides, he made no attempt to take the magazine; his browned and nicely manicured hand shot straight for your inner coat pocket and I don't mean maybe."

"Hal, you're unjust—you're . . ."

"Now, Unk," Hal interposed. "I'm not that bad, honest. I know what I saw, and believe me I'd rather think that he didn't want

to go for your inner pocket. But he did! If he was so bent on getting the magazine and if his feelings were ruffled to the point that he made out they were, how is it he went off without it?"

"What?"

"Why, the magazine. There it is alongside of you, right where it was all along."

"So it is, Hal." Denis Keen thrust his long fingers down between the canvas and the woodwork and brought forth the disputed magazine. He studied it for a moment, shaking his long, slim head.

"Well, do you still think it doesn't look mighty funny, Unk?" Hal asked in smiling triumph.

"Hal, my dear boy, there's an element of doubt in everything—most everything. You'll learn that quickly enough if you follow in my footsteps. And as for this particular incident —well, you must realize that Señor Goncalves suffered insult at your hands. You admitted yourself his feelings were ruffled. Well then, is it not perfectly plausible that he could have forgotten the magazine because of his great stress? I dare say that anyone would forget the object of his visit in the face of that un-

just accusation. Señor Goncalves was thinking only of his wounded pride when he bid us goodnight."

"Maybe," said Hal with a contemptuous sniff, "and maybe not. Anyway, I've got to hand it to you, Unk, for thinking the best of that little Brazil-nut. You want to see things for yourself, huh? Well, I've got a hunch you'll see all you want of that bird."

"What could he possibly know or want?"

"Listen, Unk," Hal answered, lowering his voice instinctively, "the Brazilian Government must have a few leaks in it the same as any other government. They invited the U. S. to send you down here to coöperate with them in hunting down the why and wherefore of this smuggling firearms business, didn't they? Well, what's to stop a few outsiders from finding out where and when you're traveling?"

"Good logic, Hal," Denis Keen smiled. "You think there must be informers in the government here giving out a tip or two to the rebel men, eh? In other words, you think that perhaps our dapper Señor Carlo Goncalves is a rebel spy, eh?"

"Righto, Unk, old scout. And I think that Brazil-nut was trying to pick your pocket—I

do! Listen, Unk, have you any papers you wouldn't care about losing right now, huh?"

"One, and it's my letter of introduction from Rio to the interventor (he's a sort of Governor, I believe) of *Manaos*. It's a polite and lengthy document, in code of course, asking his help in securing a suitable retinue for our journey into the interior after that scamp Renan."

"*Renan!*" Hal breathed admiringly. "Gosh, Unk, that fellow's name just makes me want to meet him even if he is being hunted by two countries for smuggling ammunition to Brazilian rebels."

"He's merely wanted in connection with the smuggling, Hal. Naturally he takes no actual part in it. He merely exercises his gracious personality in forcing unscrupulous American munitions manufacturers to enter into his illegal plans. Renan is a soldier of fortune from what I can understand. No one seems to know whether he's English or American—it is certain that he's either one or the other. But everyone is agreed that he's a man of mystery."

It was then that they became aware of a figure moving in the shadows aft. Hal jumped

from his chair and was after it in a flash. However, the figure eluded him, and though he searched the deck and near saloon for a full five minutes he returned without a clue.

"Not a soul anywhere, Unk," he announced breathlessly. "I circled the whole blame deck too. Didn't even run into a sailor. Funny. Were we talking very loud that time?"

"Not above a whisper. Hardly that. I dare say one would have had to come right up to our chairs to catch a word. Regardless of your hunches, Hal, I never take chances in talking—not anywhere."

"I know—I just thought maybe . . . say, Unk, is the Brazil-nut's cabin the fourth one from ours?"

"I believe so. Why?"

"Just that there wasn't a light or anything. But then, maybe he went to bed."

"Even a Brazilian like Señor Goncalves has to go to bed, you know."

Hal smiled good-naturedly at the playful thrust and shook back an errant lock of hair from his forehead.

"Even so, Unk, my impression of him is that he goes to bed when other people don't. Don't

ask me why I think it. I couldn't tell you. That bird is a riddle to me."

"And you're going to solve him yourself, I suppose?"

"Me?" asked Hal. He laughed. "I'd like to, but, who knows?"

Who, indeed!

CHAPTER II

AN INTRUDER

As THEY undressed for bed they heard the throb of the engines cease and, after the captain gave some orders in blatant Portuguese, the boat slowed down and stopped. An obliging steward informed Hal that they were anchoring at the entrance to the Narrows, waiting for daybreak before they dared pass through its tiny channels.

"Then that means we'll have a nice, quiet night to sleep," said Denis Keen, stifling a yawn. "Those engines are the noisiest things in Christendom."

Hal undressed with alacrity and said nothing until after he had crawled into his bunk.

"You feel all right about everything, huh, Unk?" he asked thoughtfully. "That is—I mean you don't think that these revolutionary fellows would have any reason to get after you, huh?"

Denis Keen laid his shoes aside carefully

and then got into the bunk above his nephew.

"My mind's at peace with all the world," he chuckled. "I'm not interested in the revolutionary fellows—I'm interested in trailing down Renan to find out how, when and where he gets in communication with American munitions men. That's my job, Hal. It's the American munitions men that the U. S. government will eventually handle satisfactorily, and I've got to find who they are. As for Renan—if he's a U. S. citizen and we can get him on U. S. territory—well, so much the better. But if not, Brazil has reason enough to hold him, and if I can help them to do it, I will. Of course, in sifting things down to a common denominator, the Brazilian rebels wouldn't have any reason to think kindly of me. My presence in their country is a warning that their munitions supply will shortly be cut off."

"Then the Brazil-nut—if he is a spy, would have reason enough to want to find out what you know, huh?"

"If he is a spy, he would. If he could decipher my letter he would find out that the Brazilian Government has reason to believe that Renan is in a jungle spot many miles

back from the *Rio Yauapery*. It is in a section still inhabited by wild tribes. But Renan wouldn't worry about a little thing like that. If he's visiting General Jao Ceara, commanding the rebel forces, then the savage element is twofold. From all accounts, Ceara's got a wild lot of men—half-castes for the most part —he's one himself."

"Man, and we've got to go to a place like that!"

"Maybe not. If I know these half-castes as well as I think I do, they can be bribed into giving me a little information. In that way I can find out when and where the next munitions shipment is due and lo, to trace the rest of the story, both before and after, will be comparatively easy."

"I hope so, Unk. Gosh, there's promise of thrills, though, huh?"

"Some. We've been promised adequate military protection. We're to work out of *Manaos*. Now I've told you all I know, Hal, so put your mind at rest for the night. My precious code letter is safe in my pajama pocket. Go to sleep. I can hardly talk, I'm so drowsy."

Hal stretched out and, after pounding his pillow into a mound, lay down. He could catch a glimpse of the deck rail through the tiny window and watched the shadows playing upon it from the mooring lights, fore and aft.

A deep, languorous silence enveloped the clumsy boat, and now and again Hal caught a whiff of the damp, warm jungle in the faint breeze that blew about his curly head. It gave him pause, that smell of jungle, and in his mind he went many times over every detail of what his uncle had told him concerning Renan, that colorful man of mystery who was even then hidden away in a savage stronghold.

The thought of it was fascinating to an adventurous young man like Hal and he felt doubly glad that he had given up the prospect of a mild summer in the north woods for this strange and hazardous journey on the Amazon. He closed his eyes to try and visualize it more clearly and was soon fast asleep.

His dreams were vivid, fantastic things in which he did much breathless chasing through trackless jungle after hundreds of bayonets. That the bayonets were animate, breathing things did not seem to surprise him in the

least. Neither did he feel any consternation that this vast army of firearms should suddenly resolve itself into one human being who quickly overpowered him and stood guard over his supine body.

Ever so gradually his subconscious being was aroused to an awareness that another presence was standing over him and looking down upon his sleeping countenance. Startled by this realization, Hal became suddenly alert. He felt a little chilled to lie there trying to feign sleep while he thought out what move he should make first.

Suddenly, however, he knew that this alien presence was no longer beside him. He heard not a sound until the door creaked and in a second he was on his feet shouting after the fleeing intruder.

A sailor came running and at Hal's orders he continued the chase while the excited young man hurried back into the cabin to get his shoes. Denis Keen was by that time thoroughly aroused and on his feet.

Hal explained the situation in a few words while he pulled on his shoes.

"I guess I surprised him, Unk—just in time," he said breathlessly.

"Just in time to see him get away," said Denis Keen significantly. "My pajama pocket . . ."

"You mean, Unk . . ."

"That my letter has been stolen."

CHAPTER III

PIZELLA, THE INSCRUTABLE

BEFORE Hal had recovered from his astonishment, there burst into the cabin, the sailor, who was leading a cringing, ratlike little man. Behind them came the captain, wringing his hands excitedly and talking in vociferous Portuguese.

"Many pardons, Señors!" said he, bowing apologetically. "This half-caste, Pizella—he come up from steerage to rob you—yes?"

"I've been robbed of something important," Denis Keen answered and explained in Spanish the importance of his letter.

The captain was irate with the half-caste, Pizella, and with the aid of the sailor proceeded to search him most thoroughly. But this availed them nothing.

"Nothing?" Hal asked. He glanced at the sailor. "You sure this is the bird I told you to beat it after?"

"Most certain, Señor," the sailor assured him. "I caught him half-way down the stairway."

"Hmph," said Denis Keen, "question him, then."

A few more minutes ensued in which the captain and the sailor took turns at arguing with the man in an unintelligible patois. But nothing came of this either, for the half-caste protested that he was entirely innocent.

"Then what can we do?" the captain beseeched Denis Keen. "We find nothing stolen on Pizella, the young Señor Hal does not know sure that it was he in the cabin—he admits it very truly when he asks the sailor was he sure."

"That is very true, Captain," said Denis Keen. "My nephew could not swear to it that this man was the intruder, can you, Hal?"

Hal could not. A fair-sized group of upper deck passengers had gathered about their cabin door listening to the singular conversation. At the head of them stood Señor Carlo Goncalves in a state of partial dishabille and listening attentively.

When Denis Keen had dismissed the wretched Pizella because of lack of evidence,

the dapper Brazilian came forward twisting his little waxed moustache and smiling.

"Perhaps you have lost not so very much—yes?" he asked sympathetically.

"Perhaps not," Denis Keen smiled. "Just a letter, Señor."

Señor Goncalves looked astonished, then comprehending.

"Ah, but the letter is important—no?"

"Yes," Denis Keen smiled, "it is important. You know nothing about this man Pizella?"

"Nothing except he is half-caste and that speaks much, Señor," said Goncalves genially. "They do quite funny things, these half-castes."

"Such as *espionage?*" Denis Keen asked quietly, yet forcefully.

Hal watched the dapper Brazilian narrowly, but caught not one betraying movement. The man's swarthy face showed only a sincere concern that these aliens should be distressed in his beloved country.

"The half-castes they are all rebels perhaps," said the man at length. "But that they should bother the Señors—ah, it is deplorable. For why should the half-caste Pizella . . ."

"Perhaps he had reason to believe I had something to do with your government," interposed Denis Keen. "I have—as a friendly neighbor. But my letter—it was one of introduction to the interventor at *Manaos*. With his aid I am to get together a party suitable to my purpose. I am interested in anthropology, Señor, just a dilettante, of course, and my nephew, Hal, inherits the curse."

Señor Goncalves laughed with great gusto and twisted his tiny moustache until each end resembled sharp pin points.

"Ah, but that is interesting, Señor," said he genially. "But as for your letter—ah, it is nothing, for I myself know the interventor—I can take you to him."

"That is indeed kind, Señor," said Denis Keen relaxing. "Very kind."

"Ah, it is nothing, Señors, quite nothing. I should be delighted to help my neighbor Americanos on their interesting journey into the Unknown. And now shall we enjoy the rest of the journey to *Manaos*—no?"

"Yes," Denis Keen chuckled. "We shall indeed."

Hal smiled wryly—he was still smiling

when the Señor had bowed himself out of their cabin to dress for breakfast. Denis Keen observed him carefully.

"You seem to be laughing up your sleeve, as usual, Hal."

"I am, Unk. It's a case of the noise is ended but the suspicion lingers on."

"You're just hopeless, Hal. I watched the man closely—so did you. Besides, he is acquainted with the interventor and that serves my purpose. I shall have no further use for the Señor, once I get an audience with the interventor. He'll know no more about us than he does now."

"Well, that gives him a pretty wide margin, Unk. Wasn't it telling him a lot just to say you missed that letter?"

"Not at all. Most Americans on such expeditions as it is believed we contemplate secure letters of introduction along their itinerary. The dapper chap is just a former prosperous man forced by circumstances to go trading into the interior for rubber as his only means of livelihood. He's a jolly chap, you must admit, and with an inherent sense of hospitality. And as for any continued suspicion of him, Hal, you saw with your own

eyes that he was in pajamas and dressing gown, while you are sure that the man who ran from this cabin was fully dressed."

"Yes, that's true, Unk. Oh, I guess I'm just a bug on hunches. I'll try and forget it, because I do admit the Brazil-nut's a friendly little guy—yes, he isn't half bad for a shipmate. But I would like to know about that letter."

"Who wouldn't? It's futile to wonder, though. I'm convinced that the little Pizella isn't what he looks. I think he took the letter all right, but my idea is that he's either hidden it or thrown it into the river before the sailor caught him at the foot of the stairs. But our chances for holding him were nil when you couldn't identify him."

"How could I in the dark and when he ran so fast, too?" Hal protested. "I couldn't say it honestly even if I felt I was right."

"Of course. But put it out of your mind. The captain has promised to have Pizella watched closely for the rest of the voyage. Now let's hurry and dress so we can get breakfast over with. The Señor promised me yesterday afternoon that he'd escort me below this morning. He's going to explain in his in-

imitable way two or three quite interesting looking half-castes that I happened to spot down in the steerage yesterday. He seems to have a knack for worming historical facts out of people. He did that with a Colombian sailor who was stationed up forward."

"Well, look out he doesn't worm any historical facts out of you."

They laughed over this together and finished dressing. Breakfast followed, and when they strolled out on deck to meet the dapper Brazilian, the steamer was chugging her way through the Narrows.

They spent an interesting hour down in the steerage with the vivacious Brazilian, then lingered at the deck rail there to view the surrounding forest which all but brushed the ship on either side. At times it seemed as if the jungle had closed in and was trying to choke them, and that they were writhing out of its clutches, struggling ahead with heroic effort.

Hal felt stifled at the scene and said so. Señor Goncalves was at once all concern. They would return to the upper deck immediately he said and proceeded to lead the way, when the half-caste, Pizella, shuffled into

sight. Instinctively they stopped, waiting for him to pass.

He glanced at them all in his shiftless, sullen way—first at Denis Keen and then at Hal. Suddenly his dark little eyes rested on the Brazilian, then quickly dropped. In a moment, he had disappeared around the other side of the deck.

Not a word passed among them concerning the wretched-looking creature and Hal followed the others to the upper deck in silence. He was thinking, however, and greatly troubled. Try as he would, he could not repress that small questioning voice within.

Was there any significance in the glance that passed between the half-caste and Goncalves?

CHAPTER IV

A DECK CHASE

By NIGHTFALL they had wormed their way out of the Narrows and came at last to the main stream of the Amazon River. Hal had his first glimpse of it shortly after evening coffee when he strolled out on deck alone. His uncle preferred reading a long-neglected book in the cabin until bedtime.

Hal stood with his elbows resting on the polished rail and placidly puffed a cigarette. The setting sun in all its glory was imprisoned behind a mass of feathery clouds and reflected in the dark yellow water surging under the steamer's bow.

The day had been a pleasant one and Hal had been untroubled by the morning's haunting doubts. Señor Goncalves was proving to be more and more a thoroughly good fellow and pleasant shipmate. There was nothing to worry about and, had it not been for the singu-

lar disappearance of his uncle's letter, all would be well.

But he tried not to let that disturb his placidity, and fixed his dreamy glance on the dense, low-lying forest stretching along the river bank in an unbroken wall of trees. Being at the end of the rainy season, the jungle seemed more than ever impenetrable because of the water covering the roots and creeping far up the trunks of the trees.

A monkey swung high in the bough of a distant tree, a few macaws and parrots hovered near by seeking a perch for the night. Then the fleecy clouds faded into the deep turquoise heavens and the shadows of night stole out from the jungle and crept on over the surging Amazon.

The formidable shriek of a jaguar floated down on the breeze, leaving a curious metallic echo in its wake. When that had died away Hal was conscious of a melancholy solitude enveloping the steamer. Not a soul but himself occupied that end of the deck; everyone else seemed to be in the saloon, playing cards and smoking.

He yawned sleepily and sought the seclusion

of a deck chair that stood back in the shadow of a funnel. He would have a smoke or two, then go in and join his uncle with a book.

He had no sooner settled himself, however, than he heard the soft swish of a footstep coming up the stair. It struck him at once as not being that of a seaman's sturdy, honest tread. It sounded too cautious and secretive, and though he was curious as to who it might be, he was too lazy to stir in his comfortable chair and find out. But when the footstep sounded on the last step and pattered upon the deck in a soft, shiftless tread, Hal was suddenly aroused.

He leaned forward in the chair and got a flashing glimpse of Pizella's face as he disappeared around the bow toward port side.

Hal was on his feet and stole cautiously after him. He was certain that the man hadn't seen him, yet, when he got around on the deck, the fellow was almost aft. It was then that he turned for a moment and, after looking back, darted about to the other side again.

Hal chased him in earnest then, leaping along in great strides until he came back to where he had started. Pizella was not to be seen, however, neither down the stairway nor

anywhere about the upper deck, which the irate young man circled again.

After a futile search, Hal strolled past the saloon. Señor Goncalves was one of the many passengers in there making merry and contributing his share to the sprightly entertainment. In point of fact, the dapper Brazilian was the proverbial "life of the party" and his soft, purring voice preceded several outbursts of laughter.

Hal went on and he had no sooner got out of earshot of the merrymakers when he heard a door close up forward. Even as he looked, he recognized Pizella's small figure going toward the stairway. He knew it was the half-caste; that time he could have sworn to it, yet . . .

CHAPTER V

A STORY OF THE PAST

"He swore up and down that he wasn't near this deck," Hal declared vehemently, when he got back to his uncle's cabin ten minutes later. "No one in the steerage saw him come up or come down. I was the only one who saw him slinking around up here—I know it was him this time, Unk! But the sailors below thought I was seeing things I guess, for when I got down there, friend Pizella had his shoes and trousers off and was stretched out in his bunk as nice as you please."

"Strange, strange," murmured Denis Keen, putting his book down on the night table beside his elbow.

"Sure it is. The way I figured it, he must have started peeling off on his way down. Undressing on the wing, huh?"

"It would seem so, Hal. Your very earnestness convinces me that it was no mere hunch

you acted upon this time. The fellow is up to something—that's a certainty. But he wasn't anywhere near this cabin. I heard not a sound."

"And the Brazil-nut was strutting his stuff in the saloon, so he's out of the picture."

"Well, that's something to feel comfortable about." Denis Keen laughed. "Surely you didn't think . . ."

"Unk, when there's sneaking business going around like this that you can't explain or even lay one's finger on, why, one is likely to suspect everybody. Anyway, I guess they'll keep closer watch on him just to get rid of me."

"No doubt they're beginning to suspect that you have some reason for picking on Pizella. Either that or they'll think you're suffering from a Pizella complex. But in any case, Hal, I think it won't do a bit of harm to have the man watched in *Manaos.*"

They forgot about Pizella for the rest of the voyage, however, mainly because Pizella did not again appear above decks. Hal quickly forgot his hasty suspicions and was lost in the charm of the country on either side of the river. The landscape changed two days after

they entered the Amazon, and in place of the low-lying swamps, a series of hills, the *Serra Jutahy,* rose to their right.

After leaving the hills behind, they caught a brief glimpse of two settlements, larger and more important than most of those they had seen. The captain pointed out the first of these, *Santarem,* which lay near the junction of the Amazon and *Tapajos,* the latter an important southern tributary.

"*Santarem,*" the captain obligingly explained, "should interest the Señors."

"Why?" Hal asked immediately.

"It is full of the romance of a lost cause," said the captain. "After the Civil War in your great United States, a number of the slave-owning aristocracy, who refused to admit defeat and bow their heads to Yankee rule, came and settled in this far-away corner of the Amazon."

"A tremendous venture," said Denis Keen. "I dare say their task was too much for them."

"For some, Señor. Some of them returned to your fair country broken in body and spirit, but others held on. Only a very few of the older generation live, but there are the sons

and grandsons and great-grandsons to carry on—yes? A few of these families—they have scattered up this stream—down that stream. One of them that is perhaps interesting more than the others is the Pemberton family. Everyone familiar with the Amazon has heard their sad story. It began when Marcellus Pemberton, the first, settled in *Santarem* along with several other old families from Virginia."

"Marcellus Pemberton, eh?" said Denis Keen. "That certainly smacks of Old Virginia."

"He was a very bitter man, the first Marcellus Pemberton. A very young man when he went to fight against the North, he fled from his home after the War rather than bow to Yankee rule. He settled in *Santarem* with other Virginia families, took a wife from one of them, and had many children. All died but his youngest son—even his wife got the fever and died. Marcellus and his youngest son left the settlement then and went to live a little way up the *Rio Pallida Mors*. And so it is with that son that the story centers, even though he married an American señorita from *Santarem*."

"And they had a son, huh?" Hal asked interested.

"Yes, Señor Hal. But of him I know little —the grandson. It is as I said Old Marcellus' son who is interest—yes? Ten years ago he disappeared mysteriously. His wife died heartbroken a little later and left behind the girl Felice, a fair flower in the jungle wilderness, and the grandson who must now be twenty-five. Felice, like the good girl she is, stays with her grandfather who is now getting very old."

"And I suppose they're as poor as the dickens, huh?" Hal queried. "They're starving to death I bet, and yet I suppose they're keeping up the old tradition. Pride, and all that. They ought to know the war is forgotten. Peace and good will ought to be their motto and bring them back to the U. S."

"Too true, Señor Hal," the captain agreed, "but they do not stay for that, I do not think. They stay because of an uncertainty and that is the sad part of the story. I did not tell you how the Señor Marcellus, Junior, died ten years ago."

"Ah, I thought this wouldn't end without

Hal getting the pièce de résistance out of the story," Denis Keen chuckled.

"Well, I notice you're listening intently yourself," said Hal good-naturedly. "Go on, Captain."

"To be sure," said the captain amiably. "It takes but a moment to tell you that Señor Marcellus was looking for gold up the *Rio Pallida Mors* (*Pale Death*)—most people call it *Dead River,* Señors. One day he started out prepared for his long journey to his lode and he stopped a moment to tell his wife to promise him that, if some day he did not come back, they would not rest until they found his body. He had what you call a presentiment—no? But his wife she promised and the children promised, also his father. So he went and as he feared he did not return."

"And they never found him?"

"No, Señor Hal. Neither did they find where his lode had gone. To this day they have found neither him nor the mine. And so they look always for his body. The Indians they say he has come back from death in the form of a jaguar and every moonlight

night he shrieks along the banks of the river, crying for his children or his father to come and find his body in the rushing waters of *Pallida Mors.*"

"A tragic story, Captain," said Denis Keen. "They must be an unhappy group up there, being reminded of their father's sad ending every time there's a moon."

"Something spooky about him being reincarnated in jaguar form, huh? Gosh, they don't believe that part of it, this Pemberton family, do they, Captain?" Hal asked.

"Ah, no. They cannot even believe he is really dead, Señors—they say they *won't* believe it till they find his body. And so they wait and the jaguar shrieks on moonlight nights. But *Santarem* is long in the distance, Señors—the story is ended."

"Not for the Pembertons, I guess," said Hal sympathetically. "Gosh blame it, I'd like to help those poor people find that man so's they could get away and live like civilized people."

"I think," said his uncle, after the captain had left them quite alone, "that you have enough on your hands right now. What with your worries about Pizella, my future wor-

ries about tracing these munitions to Renan, I think we have sufficient for two human minds."

"Aw, we could tackle this Pemberton business afterward, couldn't we, Unk? Even if we just stopped to pay them a friendly visit. Gol darn it, I should think they'd be tickled silly to talk to a couple of sympathetic Americans after living in the wilderness and surrounded by savages all their . . ."

"I take it this *Pallida Mors* will have you for a visit, come sunshine or storm, eh, Hal?"

"And how! A nice little surprise visit to the Pembertons," Hal mused delightedly.

Destiny thought differently about it evidently, for Hal was the one to be surprised, not the Pembertons.

CHAPTER VI

A FAMILIAR FOLLOWER

THEY departed from the main stream and proceeded up the black waters of the *Rio Negro* just after sunrise. *Manaos,* with its modern buildings, crowded streets and electric lights, was indeed a "city lost in the jungle," for a half mile beyond the city limits, the jungle, primeval and inviolable, lay like a vast green canvas under the sparkling sunlight.

"No one in the city knows what is in that forest twenty miles away," Señor Goncalves informed Hal and his uncle as they drew into the wharf. "*Manaos* does not care to know, Señors, for she prefers to be a little New York and forget the naked savages that roam the forests."

"Believe me, I wouldn't forget the naked savages if I was a *Manaosan,*" said Hal earnestly. "I'd take hikes into the jungle and see what was doing."

"That is understood, Hal," laughed his

uncle. "But there are few *Manaosans,* if any, that are cursed with your snoopiness. Life apparently means much to them and they are far too wise to risk that precious gift just to find out what the wild, naked savage is doing in his own jungle. You don't mean to tell me that you are adding the suburbs of *Manaos* to your already overcrowded itinerary!"

"Listen, Unk, I'm going to see all there is to see and you can't blame me. Gol darn it, this is my first trip to Brazil and the Amazon, and I've only got a few months to see it in. Boy, it's the chance of a lifetime maybe, so why miss anything?"

The dapper Brazilian twisted his trim little moustache and laughed.

"Ah, Señor Hal he has the right idea, Señor Keen," he said. "He goes in for—what you call it—sport? Ah, but that is well. So I shall show him places—no? There are the movies to go to—even you shall see this afternoon a fine aviation field where is a great friend of mine, José Rodriguez. He is what you Americans call the *Ace*—yes?"

"Gosh," Hal said, "I'd think it was immense to meet a Brazilian Ace. Think he'd like to take us up for a spin around?"

"Ah, that is just what I was going to suggest, Señor Hal. He is very kind, José. Perhaps you would like him to take you for the spin over the *Manaos* jungle, eh?"

"Great—*immense!*" Hal enthused. "You do think of things, Goncalves—I'll say that for you! So we start this afternoon, huh?"

"To be sure, Señor Hal."

It was something to look forward to and Hal did all of that while the amiable Señor escorted his uncle to *Manaos'* best hotel. The trials of registering and selecting comfortable rooms always bored him and he preferred returning to the hostelry when all those formalities were over with.

Consequently, Hal strolled through the busy little city after having breakfast at a quaint coffee house. Up one street and down another, he ambled along with a grace that attracted attention wherever he went. Clad in white polo shirt, immaculate flannels and sport shoes, his splendid, towering physique and crown of red-gold hair stood out in bold relief against the short, dark-skinned *Manaosans.* More than one dusky damosel arrayed in New York's latest fashion allowed herself a second glance at him in passing.

But Hal was invulnerable where the *Manaos* maidens were concerned. His weakness was adventure. Also, during the first part of his stroll he was too interested in watching the thousands of Amazonian vultures which hovered overhead. Garden after garden was crowded with strange birds: egrets with their delicate feathers, duckbills, curious snipe with claws in the bend of their wings, and parrots shrieking in an alien tongue as he passed.

Once he stopped to observe a blustering *jaribu,* or Amazonian heron, who was trying to lord it over two gorgeously plumed egrets. Suddenly he was aware of a shadow behind him, and when he turned he saw Pizella not ten feet distant. Hal swung completely about and faced the half-caste.

"You're not," he said calmly, "following me, are you?"

Pizella was inscrutable. He did not even slacken his shambling pace and as he caught up with Hal his shifty eyes were expressionless and seemed not to see his questioner. In point of fact, he even made so bold as to attempt to pass right by.

But Hal would have none of it. He leaned down from his great height and closed his

large, slim hand tightly over the man's scruff.

"I was talking to you, Pizella," he said quietly. "Maybe you can't understand my language, but, by heck, you can understand what my hand means."

Pizella's face never changed. He glanced up at Hal in that same expressionless manner as if he neither heard nor understood. To make matters worse a crowd began to gather and in a couple of seconds there was such a pushing, babbling and confusion that the half-caste got away.

Hal pushed through the throng after him but was destined to disappointment. Pizella was nowhere in sight. Gardens to the right of him, gardens to the left of him—the man might have escaped through any number of them. In any event, he was not to be found.

After searching for almost two hours, Hal turned back to the hotel, thoughtful and troubled.

CHAPTER VII

HUNCHES

"It's got to look downright serious, Unk," Hal said, after entering their rooms in the hotel. "It's not just a coincidence, my meeting him like that, or he wouldn't have pulled away when he saw his chance. Why wasn't he reported to the police?"

"The captain promised me he would attend to it, Hal. Apparently he didn't. I myself saw Pizella not fifteen minutes ago."

"How—where?"

"Señor Goncalves has a room on the next floor," Denis Keen explained. "I had occasion to think that perhaps I could get him to give me that letter to His Excellency, the interventor, this afternoon and I went up. Just as I got to the Señor's room, whom was he showing out the door but Pizella."

"*Unk!* You . . ."

"Wait a minute before you come to conclusions. I did. Goncalves acted annoyed more

than surprised—I would even go so far as to say that he was somewhat agitated."

"With you coming unexpectedly?"

"He directed a flow of abuse at the departing Pizella's head. Told him not to show his nose around there again and words to that effect. Then, with his usual cheeriness and perfect hospitality, he invited me in and told me that Pizella had the brass to seek him out and ask him for a job as guide on his expedition. So that explained it."

"What do you think about it, Unk?"

"Everything," Denis Keen chuckled, and rose to fleck some ashes from his cigarette. "Perhaps that poor devil has really been seeking a job as guide right along. Perhaps that is why he did all that sneaking around the boat—one can't get much out of him. He seems hopelessly ignorant and yet there's always that sullen look and shifty eye to consider. . . . Oh, well, he's either one thing or the other—an ignorant half-caste or an exceedingly clever half-caste. I'd like to know which."

A knock sounded at the door and at their summons a boy entered with a note. Hal took it.

"From the Brazil-nut," he said after the boy had gone. "Very informal. He says: 'Will the Señors excuse me from accompanying them to the field at two o'clock this afternoon? Business will detain me, but I beg of the Señors to not disappoint my very good friend, José Rodriguez, as he has made arrangements and has set aside time to take you up for the spin—yes? A car will come for you at two, Señors. . . . Regretfully . . .' He's signed his name with a flourish, Unk. Well, it's up to us to put in our appearance alone. I . . ."

"Then you'll put in *your* appearance alone, Hal. I have no intention of going. I've got a more serious matter to attend to. Besides, I'm not keen about airplaning in any country —much less this. I'd be just as pleased if you didn't go either."

"Aw, Unk, you'd think I was some kid. Why, I can handle controls now like nobody's business. Besides, this Rodriguez is an Ace! Do you suppose anything's likely to happen just because we're in Brazil? Gosh . . ."

"Oh, I know, Hal. It's absurd, I suppose, for me to object to your going, but I guess you're wishing some of that accursed hunch

business on me. Something's making me feel this way." He laughed uneasily. "Perhaps I'm just a little upset about other matters. Still, promise me you'll be careful—I could never face your mother if anything happened to you while you were with me."

"Unk, you're the limit! You'd think I had never set foot in a cockpit before! Why, Mother's been up in the air with me. She says I'm a world beater and she's going to let me try for my pilot's license next year. Why, she came up with me twice when Bellair was down on a visit to teach me. Gosh . . ."

"All right, Hal," said Denis Keen, pacing up and down the room. "You're old enough to know what you're doing, I suppose. This Bellair—he's one of the famous brothers, eh? Oh, I know they're considered expert airmen. Glad to hear they've taught you what you know. Guess they could give you some fair pointers as to what to do in a tight place, eh?"

"And how!" Hal exclaimed with a wry smile. "They don't teach anything else but. They're stunters on a large scale, and if you can't learn about planes from them, you'll never learn. But why all these questions about

what I learned from the Bellairs, huh? Are you really afraid I might get into a tight place with an expert like this Rodriguez is supposed to be?"

"Well, strangers, you know, Hal . . . methods are varied among airmen, aren't they? Oh, I know you're laughing up your sleeve. Now's your chance to poke fun at me about hunches, eh? Well, I won't give in to it, then. You go ahead. We'll have luncheon, then I'll ride with you in the car that Señor Goncalves has so generously sent for. The mansion of His Excellency, the interventor, is half-way toward the field, I've been given to understand."

"You going there this afternoon, Unk? Why, I thought Goncalves was going to write that letter and fix it for you to go there tomorrow?"

"No, he changed all that when I saw him in his room just a while ago. He told me he had already telephoned the interventor, explaining my want of guides and an interpreter, and His Excellency, being terribly busy with the affairs of State, requested Señor Goncalves to arrange those matters himself."

"In other words, the interventor doesn't want to be bothered with you, huh, Unk? He wants the Brazil-nut to do the work."

"So the dapper Señor told me in his inimitable way. But the fly in the ointment is this —Goncalves doesn't know that it is the duty of the interventor to see *me,* neither does he know that it is of paramount importance for me to see His Excellency regarding Renan and Ceara before I leave *Manaos.* His Excellency apparently didn't understand who the American Señor was whom Goncalves was trying to tell him about. They assured me when I left Rio that the interventor here would be notified of my coming. So I'm going this afternoon and no one is to be enlightened as to my whereabouts—*no one!* Understand, Hal?"

"Cross my heart and hope to die," Hal laughed. "Go to it, Unk."

"Most assuredly I will. I've got to see His Excellency about getting Federal aid. Do you know, Hal, I had the feeling when I was talking with Goncalves in his room that he wasn't any too anxious for me to see the interventor! His attitude . . . I don't know . . . perhaps, I imagined that too. Come on,

let's wash up and get down to luncheon before I hatch up some more hunches to worry about."

"Unk," Hal laughed, "you're a chip off the young block and I don't mean maybe."

CHAPTER VIII

A DUTCH UNCLE

HAL got out of the car at the edge of *San Gabriel* aviation field and looked about. Leveled from the surrounding jungle, it was situated at the extreme end of the city and here and there over its smooth-looking surface were divers planes, some throbbing under the impetus of running engines and some still, with their spread wings catching the reflection of the afternoon sun.

Three good-sized hangars dotted the right side of the field and Hal caught a glimpse of mechanics busy within. Several groups of men stood about chattering, while here and there some nondescript individual loitered about with that solitary air that at once proclaimed him as being one of that universal brotherhood of hoboes.

One, whose features were distinctly Anglo-Saxon, despite the ravages which the South American climate had made upon his once fair

skin, strolled over to Hal's side the moment he espied him. He was hatless and his blond hair had been burned by countless Brazilian suns until it was a kind of burnt straw color. And his clothes, though worn and thin, gave mute testimony of the wearer having seen a far happier and more prosperous era than the present one.

Hal caught the look of racial hunger on his face and warmed toward him immediately.

"Hello, fellow," said he with a warmth in his deep voice. "My name's Keen—Hal Keen."

A light shone from the stranger's gray eyes.

"Carmichael's mine, Keen," he said pleasantly. "Rene Carmichael. Awfully glad to speak the English language with a fellow being."

"But Americans aren't speaking the English language, Carmichael," Hal laughed with a twinkle in his deep blue eyes. "Nevertheless, as long as you can understand me, that's all that counts, huh?"

"It's music to my ears, Keen," answered Carmichael gravely. "It's deucedly odd how one will criticize Americans when one is safe at home, but just get away in this corner of

nowhere and see the smiling face and broad shoulders of a Yankee pop up out of this dark-skinned crowd! I tell you, Keen, it makes a chap like myself almost want to fall on your shoulder and weep." His weather-beaten face crinkled up in a smile, as he looked up at Hal. "You don't carry a stepladder around with you so I can do that, eh?" he asked whimsically.

"Nope," Hal laughed. "Notwithstanding my height, I couldn't conceal it." He glanced at Carmichael sympathetically. "Funny what you just said about Americans—I've thought that way about Englishmen too and yet as soon as I laid eyes on you, I felt just like you say you do. Kindred spirits and all that sort of thing, huh? Anyway, I guess the real trouble, the reason for all our prejudices is that we dislike everything we don't know and, consequently, can't understand, huh?"

"And now that you've met a regular Englishman—what is it, love at first sight?" His eyes danced with merriment.

"You're aces high, Carmichael. I'm tickled pink we've run into each other, that's a fact. My uncle and I were supposed to look for a Brazilian named Rodriguez out here who is

dated to take us for a spin. Unk couldn't come, so here am I alone. How would you like to take his place? I'd feel better if you came along—someone who can understand me."

The fellow studied Hal closely for a moment, then nodded.

"I'll come, but I shouldn't really. I'm due to sail for *Moura* at four. I've got a toothbrush and one or two other necessities of life back at the hotel which I have to get."

"Then you're not a ho . . ." Hal just caught himself in time. "Honestly, I'm sorry, awfully . . ."

"Save the effort, Keen. I love to be thought a hobo. As a matter of fact I am—in a sense. I'm very poor really, but I don't *have* to wear my clothes as long as I've worn this suit. It's just that it suits my—ah, purpose." He laughed and his voice was musically resonant. "Literally, though, I'm not a hobo. I really do *something* for a living, and a hard enough living it is, old chap."

"I believe it," said Hal earnestly. He studied the fellow a moment, taking note of the buoyant broad shoulders and tall slender figure. For he was really quite tall, when one did not consider Hal's towering height.

"You're deucedly odd for what I've heard about Americans, Keen," said Carmichael. "You're straightforward and honest, and not a bit snoopy. Seem to take me at my face value and all that. No questions—nothing."

"Why not?" Hal countered. "It wouldn't be my business, Carmichael. But somebody's given you a devil of an opinion of Americans! I know there are some pretty poor specimens that go shouting around in Europe, but there's lots of the other kind too, and lots that stay at home. Well, I guess I'm the kind you haven't heard about, huh? I'm snoopy in some things, though—don't think I'm not."

"Aren't we all?" Carmichael returned. "It's the way of life and people, I suppose. But there're some kinds that get on a chap's nerves. Yours is the kind that doesn't. That's why I want to tell you not to take seriously what I gave you to understand about my being from the continent. I've lived all my life in Brazil—perhaps that's why I like to play for five minutes or so that I'm really a native of some other country. I was educated in an English school in Rio and for eight happy years I fooled myself that I was a citizen of some Anglo-Saxon country. No doubt that

sounds deucedly odd coming from a chap born here. But I shall never assimilate Latin ways if I live to a ripe old age in this desolate corner of the world." He laughed bitterly. "I can only hope then that I shall be allowed the company of Anglo-Saxons in the spirit world, eh, Keen?"

"If you wish to live among Anglo-Saxons as much as that, Carmichael, I should think you'd get your wish before you die." He looked across the field and saw a short, helmeted figure coming toward them. "Don Rodriguez, I bet. He's smiling, so that must be he. He's smiling with recognition as if he's been given a pretty accurate description of me."

"And a description one could never forget," said Carmichael. "You must tell me more about yourself, Keen—that is if you care to. If all Americans are like you, then I want to meet heaps of them."

"Well, I'm glad I've done so much for my country," Hal laughed. "And I'll tell you all you want to hear. Wait until we get up in the air—we'll have a little shouting party, huh?"

"Righto."

The helmeted figure came straight to Hal

with outstretched hand and black, smiling eyes.

"Señor Hal Keen—tall like a mountain and red at the top," he said in broken English, and laughed. Then he turned to Rene. "And this is the Señor uncle—no?"

"Yes," answered Carmichael with a swift chuckle, "his Dutch uncle." And in an undertone to Hal, he said: "Do I look as old as that?"

"It depends on how old looking you think an uncle ought to look," Hal grinned. "My unk seems like a kid to me yet. He's not forty."

"And I'm not thirty," said Carmichael with a poignancy in his voice that did not escape Hal. But he was all laughter the next second and he added: "At that I can still be your Dutch uncle, eh? Your Uncle Rene?"

"I'll tell the world you can! *You are!*" Hal turned then to the still-smiling Rodriguez. "When do we hop off in your bus?"

"Ah, to be sure," said the aviator. "The plane, you mean, eh? She is there—see?" he said, pointing to a small, single-motor cabin plane. "Now shall we take a fly over the jungle, you and the Señor uncle?"

"Sure," they answered unanimously. And as they followed at the aviator's heels, Rene whispered: "I kind of like this, being your Dutch uncle. And as long as he thinks so . . ."

"Why bother to explain, huh?" Hal returned in the spirit of the thing. "There's not that much difference between a real uncle and a Dutch uncle anyway."

But Hal was to learn that there *was* a difference as far as Rodriguez was concerned.

CHAPTER IX

EXIT RENE

WHEN they got to the plane, Rodriguez proceeded on into his cockpit, motioning his passengers to make themselves comfortable in the tiny cabin. After a moment they were off.

They bumped across the field, then rose into the air, hesitated a moment as if they were going to fly straight for the jungle, then soared high into the blue. Hal nodded with satisfaction, after a half hour had elapsed.

"Some beautiful country," he shouted at Carmichael. "Like a big painted canvas."

"You wouldn't think so if you got lost in it," Rene shouted back. "This fellow's taking us for quite a long hop, eh?"

Hal nodded and looked out of the tiny window down upon the endless sea of jungle over which they were passing. The plane roared on through the glistening blue and for a time neither of the young men spoke. Yet they were both aware of a peculiar sound coming

from the motor. It was not missing, yet each revolution seemed more labored than the one preceding it.

Rene looked at Hal questioningly.

"I've traveled in these things plenty, but I don't know a thing about them. But I can tell the thing isn't running perfectly."

"It isn't," Hal roared across to his newly found friend. "We're going to have trouble in a sec and I don't mean maybe. If I could talk to Rodriguez I could find out, but his English is painful and my Portuguese hasn't even begun."

"If that's the difficulty, Hal," said Rene unconsciously using the name with all the affection of an old acquaintance, "why, I can help you out that way. I can speak Rodriguez," he added with a conscious chuckle.

"Gosh, that's fine," said Hal. "Come on, we'll pile up there and you ask him."

The Brazilian seemed surprised to see his two passengers appear in the narrow, low doorway of his cockpit. In point of fact, Hal sensed that he was even startled. The smile that he gave them looked twisted and forced.

Carmichael questioned him in Portuguese, an undertaking which seemed interminable to

Hal. Meanwhile, the engine sounded worse and after another second it began to miss. They were in for trouble. Rodriguez' gloomy face augured the worst.

Hal noticed then with something of a start that he was wearing a chute. Neither he nor Carmichael had been asked to wear one and he wondered why. It puzzled him greatly.

"Ask him what's the idea?" Hal queried, drawing Carmichael's attention to the pilot's chute. "Do we look like orphans? We're his guests."

Carmichael stared at the chute, then grabbed Rodriguez roughly by the shoulder and a flow of Portuguese ensued. Suddenly he turned back to Hal, his weather-beaten face a little drawn.

"Of all absurd excuses, Keen—he says he didn't think to ask us if we wanted one. This is the only one on this plane—the one he's safely wearing. He also says the bus is doomed—comforting news. We're no less than two hundred miles from *Manaos* already and there isn't a deuced place for him to land in this jungle."

"Then if he thinks we're doomed, why the devil doesn't he turn back!" Hal said im-

patiently. "What's the idea of continuing north? Besides there *might* be a place we can find if he's got the nerve to fly low enough to see. There's a chance that we'll pancake and get a bit banged up, of course, but it's better than letting a bus crack up right under our noses without us making any attempt to prevent it! If you ask me—he's yellow!"

"I'm thinking so too, Keen." Carmichael frowned. "You seem to know more about planes than this chap—at least you use your head in a pinch. What do you think the chances are if we landed as you suggest. It's dense jungle right below."

"If we could find a bit of a clearing we could take it easy and let her go nose first. One thing, I guess it's all swamp down there, huh? Well, that's a help—it makes a softer berth. But to answer your question—if we can find a clearing large enough, there's a darn good chance for us skinning through whole."

"But little chance of us getting out," said Carmichael thoughtfully. "I can answer that, for I know the jungle. One of us ought to bail out in that chute right away and take a chance that this east wind blows him near enough to a settlement so that help could be had. It's nec-

essary for one of us to go, Keen. Otherwise we'll all be lost. As long as Rodriguez is wearing the chute . . ."

"No," said Hal decisively, "we'll flip a coin. Heads goes with the chute, tails stays. It'll be between you and me, then between Napoleon there and yourself. O. K.?"

"Suits me. Here goes—I'll spin," said Carmichael, taking a Brazilian coin out of his pocket and flipping it in the air. "Yours first, Keen," he called as the coin came down on his palm.

It was tails. Carmichael's flip brought heads and with the next turn the pilot lost too. Hal lost no time in ripping the chute from him and adjusting it on Carmichael.

"Good luck to you, fellow," he said. "I'll try to find a spot as near here as possible. Have you got our position."

Carmichael nodded gravely. Rodriguez uttered a little squeal, the color went from his face and in a second the plane began to wobble. Hal pulled him from behind the wheel and himself righted the ship.

"I'll keep hold of her now," he assured Carmichael who stood anxiously in the low doorway of the cockpit. "Our brave Ace isn't fit

to steer a baby carriage. He hasn't morale enough to keep himself going, much less a ship. All right, now, I'm giving you enough altitude to let you clear us nicely. Can't keep it up more than a couple of minutes though. Listen to her missing! Bail out now, Rene," he added, using the latter's Christian name unconsciously. "See you later."

"Sooner than that, Hal," Carmichael smiled wistfully. "Promise me you'll be careful."

"Doggone right I will! Scoot now!"

Hal knew he was going, knew he was gone. There was that about Carmichael, he felt, that one immediately missed—that effulgent something which seemed to radiate from his slim person. Now that light had gone with him and there was no sound but the unsteady throb of the motor. Rodriguez was huddled over in the corner of the cockpit shivering, with his eyes fixed fearfully over the illimitable roof of the jungle.

Hal, however, had ceased to consider his presence at all. Moreover, there wasn't time. Every precious second he used in circling lower and lower over the glistening green jungle and trying to remember word for word the valuable advice that the famous brothers

Bellair had given him as to what could be done in a pinch.

He had cut down a thousand feet, then two thousand, and then he could pick out the colorful birds flying from tree to tree. A few hundred feet more and he could see them quite plainly. After that he dared to let her dive a little and coming out on an even keel he saw something between the dense foliage that made his heart thump.

It was a clearing.

CHAPTER X

SAFETY?

HAL shut down the motor after that, let the plane circle once more under its own momentum, then pointed her nose straight down toward the clearing.

Within a flash he had slid from behind the wheel, reached over in the corner and dragged Rodriguez by the collar, pulling him into the cabin with a swift jerk. That accomplished, he flung himself down to the floor, head down, and called to the cowardly pilot to do the same.

Hal tried to keep his mind a blank during the ensuing seconds. Rodriguez' shrieks of fear, the tearing, ripping sounds of the fabric, and the shattering of glass did not make him move a muscle. And when he did stir it was by force, for the plane thrust her nose into the swampy ground with such an impact that he was thrown the length of the cabin floor.

There was another terrific vibration, another shattering of glass and, before the plane settled her nose in the mud, Hal and the pilot were whisked summarily against the cockpit door. Then all was still.

Hal straightened up as best he could. His head felt bruised and when he looked at his hands they were covered with blood. Aghast, he saw that it came from Rodriguez, who was lying quite still beside him in a pool of blood. An ugly gash had severed the fellow's dark throat—his lips were gray.

Hal tumbled about in getting out his handkerchief from his back pocket, for the tail of the ship was in mid-air, and he was all confused. But he managed to bandage the pilot's throat temporarily and set about rubbing his wrists. At that juncture an ominous smell floated by with the jungle breeze.

"Ship's caught afire, all right," he muttered, as a small spiral of blue smoke floated past the shattered window at his elbow.

Hal was out of it in a moment, jumping down into the soggy ground and pulling the unconscious Rodriguez after him. A rumble sounded through the plane and the next second it was enveloped in high, shooting flames.

Hal stumbled and tripped, sinking into mire over his ankles. But he managed to drag Rodriguez' heavy, inert body along, dodging and trampling down bushes, creepers, and clinging vines that grew in the little spaces between the tree trunks.

After what seemed an endless journey to him, he came at last to a sort of eminence, a tiny area of higher ground that showed evidences of having been a former human habitation. The jungle, however, was beginning to reclaim it, for the whole space was covered with a substantial growth.

Hal looked about thoughtfully, but seeing that it was the only suitable spot in sight, he lay Rodriguez down carefully. After that he hunted around them for a few sticks of wood and started a fire to keep away the mosquitoes.

That done, he set about trying to revive the pilot and after a trying five minutes saw his eyelids flicker, then open.

"It's I, Rodriguez! *Keen!* We're here—*safe!* How you feeling?"

The fellow seemed to understand perfectly, for he nodded and a look of hope came into the black eyes that were so filled with fear not

fifteen minutes before. Hal noted that his lips, however, were an ashen gray.

"You saved the plane—yes?" Rodriguez muttered weakly.

"Nope," Hal answered, shaking his head vigorously. "It's up in smoke—fire. We should worry though, huh? We're saved, anyhow."

Rodriguez smiled feebly and lifted his head, looking around, interested. Suddenly he put his hand to his bandaged throat and a terrified expression filled his eyes.

"Is it danger—no?" he asked Hal.

"No," Hal lied. "You've just got a bad cut, Rodriguez. You've lost a lot of blood. Just lie still and take it easy. I'll get some more wood to keep these pesky mosquitoes away."

"The glass she cut me—no?" He seemed to be obsessed by his wound.

"I'll say she did. That's why I wanted you to lie face down as I did. I knew we were in for something."

"I feel weak like baby."

"I'm sorry, old fellow," said Hal sincerely. "I'm sorry we couldn't let you take the chute

HAL MANAGED TO DRAG RODRIGUEZ' HEAVY, INERT BODY ALONG.

and escape all this, but it wouldn't have been sporting. *Understand?*"

The pilot nodded weakly. He even smiled.

"I was not frightened for death so much, Señor Hal. More I was frightened for myself —my sins."

Hal frowned until his freckled brow wrinkled into one deep channel between his bright blue eyes. Then a light of understanding spread over his fair face and he smiled.

"Oh, you mean your religion, huh, Rodriguez?" he asked. "You mean you were afraid of your sins in case you did die, huh?"

Rodriguez made the sign of the cross and his dark-skinned hands fell limply to his sides.

"Yes, yes, Señor. My sins were many— too many to die a peaceful death, Señor. I would have to tell you . . ." He closed his eyes and seemed to doze off.

Hal shrugged his shoulders and got up. He could hear the burning plane snapping and cracking against its steel frame. Its acrid fumes carried on the breeze even to where he stood and hung heavily on the air in a blue haze.

A monkey scolded sharply from a near-by

tree and instinctively Hal picked up a piece of dead limb and swung it at him.

"Can't you see there's a sick boy here who needs sleep!" he stage whispered to the animal above them.

The monkey stared down with an almost sad expression on its little old face. Then after he scolded some more he swung along to the opposite branch and was soon swallowed up in the dense foliage.

Hal continued to gather more wood after that, looking at his patient at five-minute intervals. But Rodriguez slept on, despite the fact that a fresh bandage had been adjusted —the pilot's own handkerchief.

It was almost dark in the dense forest before Hal stopped. His pile of wood had become quite high—enough to do them for the long night, he thought, as he sat down on it to have a smoke.

A parrot screeched somewhere in the distance, the jungle teemed with life and sound, and yet it seemed to Hal he had never sat in such oppressive silence before. Suddenly, to his great delight, Rodriguez awakened and, noting the glow of their campfire, smiled.

"Ah, it is comfort, the fire," he sighed. "You know the jungle—no?"

"Yes," Hal answered with a cheerful smile. "I've been in Panama—yes. I know the jungle."

"Ah," the pilot sighed weakly and closed his eyes again.

Hal glanced at him quickly and a fear asserted itself. Rodriguez' throat was still bleeding profusely—the fellow's face had a ghastly look in the firelight.

Did it mean death?

CHAPTER XI

A VIGIL

THE black vault of heaven with its twinkling stars could be seen in narrow strips through the entangled tops of closely growing trees. Hal looked up at it longingly from time to time and wondered if a searching party did come flying overhead, whether or not they would be able to penetrate the dense screen and see them.

Their campfire, though piled so high, seemed pitifully inadequate for such a purpose, and he experienced a sinking sensation in his stomach when he thought how much less it could be seen in the daylight. Too, Carmichael might not be any better off than they. Parachutes very often failed one. Perhaps it would have been better if they had all stuck and taken their chances together. Rodriguez was in such a bad way . . . Hal had long ago given up trying to stop the bleeding. But he felt so hopeless about it, so helpless. There

seemed nothing for him to do but sit and wait.

He leaned over to the woodpile from time to time, replenishing the blaze. Sometimes Rodriguez would sigh, then sink into a deeper sleep than before. Hal was always hoping that the sleep was doing him good, but it occurred to him after a time that the pilot's strength was slowly ebbing and that it wasn't slumber, but a torpor which held him in its grip.

His heart went out to the young man and he completely forgave him his cowardice. Certainly Rodriguez was getting the worst of it. Perhaps it was true that he had feared the consequences of his sins more than his actual departure from life. Hal shrugged his shoulders at the thought—the Latin temperament was indeed strange.

For a little while after that, Hal began to think of food and water. He had had neither since luncheon and, for a healthy young man with his appetite, that was a fearful length of time to go without nourishment. But that too seemed an after consideration in the face of the present pall that hung over that strange little jungle camp.

Hal reached out and taking Rodriguez' hand

felt of his pulse. He knew little about such things, yet enough to realize that the pilot's pulse beats were anything but normal. At times he could barely distinguish any pulsation at all. Moreover, the fellow's hand felt cold and clammy in his own.

When he went to relinquish his hold, Rodriguez showed some resistance. He held feebly to Hal's warm, strong hand and smiled.

"I feel not so cold, Señor," he explained hesitantly. "It's . . ." he seemed too weak to say more.

"You mean it makes you feel better and warmer for me to hold on to your hands?" Hal asked him solicitously.

Rodriguez nodded.

"All right, fellow. Here, give me the other one—I'll rub them, huh? We'll have a little holding hands party." Hal chuckled, trying not to see the questioning, poignant look in the pilot's eyes.

He went to sleep again this way, but Hal kept hold of both his hands, pressing them with his own at intervals. It gave him a peculiar sensation, this maternal gesture on his part, and if he had not felt so utterly sad about

Rodriguez' condition he would have been abashed at his display of tenderness.

The long hours crept by—a glimpse of full moon showed in a single silver moonbeam through the trees. From the depths beyond the clearing came the mournful sound of living things unseen. The weird plaint of the sloth came drifting down the breeze, tree frogs and crickets clacked and hummed with a monotony that was utterly depressing, and once the air shook with a thunderous concussion from some falling tree.

Hal started but it did not seem to bother the airman. He merely moved in his torpor and muttered unintelligibly. After five minutes of this he spoke aloud, feebly yet clearly.

"It was for the *Cause,* Señor . . . the *Cause.* Señor Goncalves he too did it for the *Cause.* But ah, how it troubles me, Señor. . . ."

"What troubles you, Rodriguez?" Hal asked, pressing gently down on his hand. "What are you talking about, fellow?"

The airman seemed not to hear, however, but went on muttering, sometimes aloud, sometimes not. Hal came to the conclusion that he was in a sort of delirium and realized

that he ought to have water for the suffering fellow. Suddenly he began talking again:

"Señor Goncalves he came to me and asked would I take the Señors, uncle and nephew, up for the *Cause* . . . for the *Cause*. I was to wear the chute—I was to escape, Señor . . . escape, eh?" He laughed feebly, bitterly. "Ah, but I am punished . . . punished. It is I who don't escape, eh? I who would see two innocent Señors die for the *Cause* . . . now . . ."

There sounded then through that dark, breathless atmosphere a call steeped in wretchedness and black despair—the wail of that lonely owl, known to bushmen as " the mother of the moon." Hal had heard many times when lost in the jungle of Panama what portent was in that cry, and he was thinking of it then when Rodriguez raised his head with effort.

"Ah, Señor Hal!" he cried in a terrified whisper. " 'Tis 'the mother of the moon' and evil to me, for I have heard it. Ah, Señor . . ."

"Lie back, old fellow," Hal soothed him. "Now there, calm down! I've heard about Old Wise Eyes too, but you don't think I believe

it, do you? Back in the good old U. S. we'd call that hokum pure and simple. Nothing to it. It's just an old owl hooting his blooming head off because he hasn't the brains to do anything else. In other words he's yelling *whoopee* in Portuguese or Brazilian or whatever you spiggotty down here. I bet you haven't understood a word of what I said? No? Well, I don't blame you exactly."

"I have not much time, Señor. I am weak . . . the owl she . . ."

"Now for the love of Pete, Rodriguez, forget it!" Hal said, scolding him gently. "It tires you too much to talk about such hokum. Lie still and if you can only hold out perhaps Señor Carmichael will get help to us soon. He may have got a break and landed near some settlement."

"Señor . . . *Carmichael?*" asked the airman faintly.

"Sure," Hal answered smiling, "that's the fellow who went out in the chute—the fellow who came up with us. His name's Carmichael. Oh say, I almost forgot, Rodriguez—of course you wouldn't understand—Carmichael and I were only fooling you about him being my uncle. My real uncle couldn't come—he

backed out at the last minute. I met Carmichael at the field just before you came along. Understand?"

Rodriguez did understand—only too well. His ghastly face looked more ghastly than ever. He pressed desperately on Hal's warm hand and sighed. Suddenly he released his own right hand and from forehead to breast devoutly made the sign of the cross.

"Señor Hal," he gasped, "I am dying . . . there is something I must tell . . ."

CHAPTER XII

FOR THE "CAUSE"

"Aw, Rodriguez, you're just feeling kind of low down, that's all," Hal soothed him. "In the morning you'll be shipshape, you'll see. Things are just sort of looking black to you."

"I am dying, Señor Hal!" Rodriguez repeated. "You must listen or I shall not die peacefully!"

"Aw, all right, old top. If it eases you to tell me something, go ahead. But you'll be as fit as a top in the morning. From what I know of Brazil-nuts, they're pretty darn hard to crack," Hal added facetiously.

The ghost of a smile flickered about Rodriguez' ashen lips but soon he was grave again.

"I am for the *Cause,*" he said faintly; "I pledged my life, my honor for the *Cause* if need be, Señor."

"You don't mean the rebels?" Hal asked, taking a moment to replenish the fire.

"Ah, you call it that, Señor. To us it is the *Cause*. We want freedom—political."

"That's what all you birds say. But go on, Rodriguez."

"Señor Goncalves he is a comrade of mine, Señor—a comrade in the *Cause*. And Señor Pizella . . ."

"Aha, we're getting somewhere," Hal interposed, taking a sudden interest. "Pizella, huh, Rodriguez?"

"Yes, Señor. He was given command to follow your Señor uncle, for you were suspect to what you call—thwart? . . . yes, thwart General Ceara's plans. The General he expect big munition shipment and your Señor uncle he was suspect to perhaps prevent the guns from coming. So Pizella he was told to find out if Señor Keen had letter and what it say about what he was going to do."

"And it was Pizella who took that letter from my uncle when we were sleeping, huh?"

"Yes, Señor Hal. And that night when passengers are in saloon, Pizella he takes letter to Señor Goncalves' cabin and leaves it there for him to decipher. They work together—no, Señor?"

"I hope to tell you they do," Hal said

thoughtfully. "Just as I suspected from the beginning, but Unk wouldn't listen to anything about Goncalves. Yet he must have suspected something this afternoon . . . but go on, Rodriguez."

"Señor Goncalves he find out from letter that your Señor uncle is on trail of Ceara's munition shipment—no? That Señor Goncalves is ordered by Ceara not to let happen. He must do anything, everything to prevent—yes? Señor Goncalves thinks one way—to invite your Señor uncle up in plane with me—the plane she is crippled over the jungle and what happens—no?"

"Yes," Hal answered grimly. "I see. It was all a hoax—a plot, huh? Only I was the fly in the ointment. To get Unk to fly, you people had to get me interested, but it fell out anyway. Unk has probably found out everything from the interventor by now—I wouldn't doubt but that they're even suspecting foul play with me already. But Goncalves, they'll get him . . ."

"Ah, if they can, Señor. But the Señor he was gone after noon today. He is now with the General Ceara and they are traveling toward a safe hiding place in the jungle." Ro-

driguez gasped at this juncture and lay still a long time because of his extremely weakened condition.

Hal looked at him, sympathizing, yet doubting. Suddenly he leaned over the Brazilian.

"But why are you telling me all this, Rodriguez? Isn't it against your famous *Cause?*"

"Ah, but yes," answered the airman in such a whisper that Hal had to listen intently. "But when one is dying . . . one's sins against one's brother man . . . Señor Hal, my religion prompts this. My soul she would never rest unless I asked your forgiveness."

"Rodriguez, old scout, I still insist you're not going to die, but if it makes you get stronger, I'll tell you that I have nothing in my heart toward you but good will. What have you done to me? Oh, I know I *could* have been cracked up plenty, but the thing is, I'm not."

"Not yet, not yet. But you are two hundred miles perhaps from white man, Señor. It is fever and jungle—no water, savage Indians before you get out. Señor Hal, you will die and I am the cause. I send you to it and it makes me afraid to die."

"Bosh, old egg," Hal said with a cheerful-

ness that he did not quite feel. "I'm a lean horse for a long race and, as I told you, I've been lost in the jungle before. Of course not quite as serious as this—I didn't have a lot of bloodthirsty Indians to take into account. Still, I can handle that when I come to it. Where there's a will, huh? But say, let's not talk of gloomy things—tell me how you managed to get that plane crippled just at the crucial moment?"

"A powder, Señor, like sand," he gasped. "She was poured into the oil—enough to make her grind up the engine in the hour—no?"

"I'll say it would. Clever trick. A gritty substance, huh? Enough to completely disrupt the machinery. Well, it did all right. *And how!* And you were supposed to try and save yourself as best you could with the chute, huh? Well, I'm sorry now we didn't let you do it. You wouldn't be feeling so rotten now. Carmichael's the kind that can skim through things, I'm certain. I can't believe he won't get out."

"It is my punishment, Señor, my religion she slaps back for thinking too much of the *Cause* and not enough of human life . . . *your life!*"

"As I told you before, Rodriguez, forget about me. I'm not holding it against you. I'm alive and kicking so far, and if I don't keep it up, well, then I'm not as good a guy as I thought I was. I've got brains and the Indians haven't. Fever and water and . . . well, I haven't got them yet, but if I do, I'll pull through."

"And if not, Señor Hal, would you curse José Rodriguez?" asked the airman pathetically. "Would you curse me if the Indians . . ."

"Absolutely not, old top," Hal assured him. "You thought you were doing right for the *Cause*—doing as you thought was right. Why should I get peeved at *you?* Little Hal isn't that way. Now rest yourself and forget your worries. You must be tired out after all that chatter. Close your eyes, old fellow."

"I do not have the need, Señor Hal," came the response. "Things are fading—even your face, your bright eyes. I can no longer see them. They are in a mist."

Hal leaned forward, startled. Rodriguez' hands were becoming colder, more limp, but he did not think it was so near. He could not believe it even then . . . he had never seen

anything just like it, never witnessed a death so calm, so apparently without effort.

Rodriguez must have sensed Hal's thoughts, for he nodded his head feebly.

"One bleeds to death without pain, Señor Hal," he whispered. "Do not worry I am suffering. The world becomes dimmer but something else comes in its place—a light that is bright and makes me happy. Since you have say you will not curse José Rodriguez I see it clear."

Hal could not talk—he could only grasp tightly the limp, cold hands in his own. But Rodriguez seemed to understand, for his features relaxed, and when the lonely owl again sent its despairing call through the silent jungle night, he did not seem to start as before. His lips barely moved, but Hal caught the words.

"'Death to Thee who hears me,' cries 'the mother of the moon,'" he was saying. "Death to me, Señor Hal; death to *you!* And when it comes, remember to say a prayer for the departed soul of José Rodriguez!"

Hal promised, choking back a tremor in his voice. Suddenly he heard a strange rustle in the tree opposite, and when he looked up, he

saw a glassy pair of eyes staring down at them in the firelight. "The mother of the moon" had come to pay them a visit.

Hal shivered despite an effort to keep calm. The owl with its broad face and strange, glassy eyes looked eerie as it sat perched upon the swinging limb above them. Then, after what seemed an interminable time, it flapped its wings and flew into the blackness beyond.

Hal was suddenly aware then that the pilot's hands had ceased to return his pressure. They became colder, limp. A sepulchral silence seemed to envelop the little camp in that moment; nothing stirred save the elfin breeze that whispered in the tree tops.

José Rodriguez was dead.

CHAPTER XIII

ALONE AND WAITING

HAL kept his fire going until the red glare of dawn forced its light through the jungle mists. Gradually the awful gloom lifted and he was able to take stock of his surroundings. Swamp, trees with creepers and clinging vines growing in the spaces between, and high overhead, a flock of *urubus* (Amazonian vultures) circled in monotonous precision.

Hal rubbed his heavy-lidded eyes vigorously and shook his disheveled red hair back into place as best he could. The drone of the whirling vultures just evident with the advent of dawn already annoyed him. What would they be if help did not come before another premature twilight had settled over the forest? He dared not think of it.

He could not bring himself to the thought of a grave for Rodriguez in the jungle. It seemed to be an admission that there was no

hope for rescue. Yet there were the vultures waiting, waiting. . . .

Mid-morning came and despite the grim presence of death, Hal felt savagely hungry and thirsty. He had been careful about his cigarettes; there were six left. He selected one now and though in need of its soothing reaction, he could not smoke it because of his empty stomach. And as a gesture of economy he pinched it out and replaced the stub in the pack.

After a period of inactivity, he suddenly decided to leave his gruesome charge for a few moments and go visit the scene of the wreck, just for something to do. It made him feel inexpressibly sad, however, for in viewing it he saw that two of the surrounding trees had burned considerably and their charred trunks were sagging in such a way as to cause the foliage on the upper limbs to lean toward the foliage of the adjoining trees and thus screen off a good part of the clearing from above.

There was little left of the plane but the framework, and the crippled motor was all but buried in the mire. Hal gave it but a hurried glance and walked back to his little camp, steeped in despair. He couldn't put down the

thought that Carmichael had not succeeded and that he need not expect any help from that source.

He would not give in to those imps of discouragement within, but bravely kept his eyes on that chink of sky shining through the trees. Noon came and was gone, the vultures had increased in number and Hal saw, with sinking heart, that they were getting bolder, flying lower and lower.

He gathered a quantity of dead leaves, all the foliage that he could find in the immediate neighborhood, and made a temporary bier for the dead airman. In lifting him over into it, he felt something hard and bulging in the back pocket of his trousers. Hal drew it out and saw to his joy that it was a thirty-eight calibre revolver and seemed to be fully loaded.

A further search of the young man's pockets revealed nothing but some small change and the usual miscellaneous collection one is apt to find. Hal sighed with relief when the task was over and carefully put all his findings into Rodriguez' helmet.

That done, he sat down and made a careful inspection of the gun. True to his first hope, there wasn't a chamber discharged and this

discovery gave Hal pause, for it occurred to him that Rodriguez had had in his possession a most effectual weapon with which to make good his intention of bailing out in the parachute. Why then had he not used it?

Hal came to the conclusion that it must have been because Rodriguez' character was a contradiction. Though he could participate in a murderous plot, when it came to carrying it out, he thought more of the effect that it would have on his soul, than he did of his beloved *Cause.*

"Not a half bad scout at that, poor devil," Hal summed it up. "How do I know what my behavior would be under a like condition? I certainly wouldn't see innocent people crash to their deaths and keep an easy conscience."

Hal pocketed his gun carefully and rambled about the neighborhood the remainder of the afternoon. Just before the gloom crept into the clearing he bethought himself of all the fantastic tales he had heard of the bounty of the Amazon jungle. Most of the stories gave one the impression that food could be had by reaching out and plucking it from the fruit-laden trees. Never, he realized, was a condition more exaggerated, for the primeval

jungle in which he was lost had little or nothing to offer in the way of food.

He had found a few trees which seemed to offer some promise of allaying his hunger, but after a few bites of the fruit he was forced to throw it down in disgust. It was too bitter for human consumption. Other fruit which looked more palatable he was afraid to touch, fearing poisoning might be the result.

And so just as the first shadows of the premature twilight stalked the jungle, Hal espied an *inambu,* or forest fowl, fluttering homeward for the night. A well-timed shot, however, intercepted him and he fell straight into the clearing.

Hal's hopes rose a little after that. He found, surprisingly, that he could do wonders with his two bare hands. The fowl was plucked and given as good a cleaning as was possible, considering the lack of water. And if he was a little skeptical as to its sanitary merits, he did not allow the thought to spoil the pleasant anticipation of a poultry dinner.

He gathered wood again, piles of it, and built a fine fire. Darkness had settled before the meal was cooked, but Hal was indifferent to everything save his primitive cooking. The

fowl required all his attention and had to be roasted over the fire by means of a stick which he had broken at one end into a sort of make-shift prong.

He consumed the whole bird, and though it was rather tasteless without salt, he was thankful for that much. Water he tried not to think of. Sleep he could have for the taking, and he set about piling wood onto the fire so that he could sleep for an hour or two without fear of having the jungle night prowlers disturb his much-needed slumber.

The hands of his wrist watch pointed to eight o'clock as he settled himself close to the fire. The heat was a little uncomfortable, but he dared not risk sleeping away from its protecting glow. And as he shut his eyes to the dismal solitude about him, his prayer was a hope that tomorrow would bring help.

But Hal was to learn that tomorrow never comes.

CHAPTER XIV

RODRIGUEZ HAS COMPANY

HAL awakened at the witching hour of midnight to find that he was being deluged in a rainstorm, his fire was out and he couldn't see anything but the radium-faced dial of his wrist watch.

He jumped up and scurried to the shelter of some near-by trees, shivering in his soaked clothes. Something moved swiftly near by, he heard a rustle of leaves and the patter of slow, velvety footsteps on the soggy ground.

In a second he had delved into his pocket and brought out his package of matches. But they were dry and he had one lighted in an instant—in time to catch a flashing glimpse of a jaguar's yellowish-brown spots as it leaped across Rodriguez' temporary bier and disappeared between the trees.

Hal shouted to frighten it and his match burned out. He continued to shout, meanwhile breathlessly seeking for some of the

drier pieces of wood which he had stored beneath the trees. The rain stopped then, but still it took him an interminable time to coax a flame out of the damp wood. But at last he succeeded and after he had coaxed the flame into a fairly generous fire he set about drying out the rest of the wood.

From time to time he glanced at the tell-tale mound in the shadows and each time he shivered. The jaguar incident brought home to him the realization that necessity forced Rodriguez' last resting place to be in the jungle. Decency forbade a recurrence of that midnight scene and he knew that dawn would bring again the black scavengers of the air in increased numbers. Nothing but a quick, effectual burial would drive them away.

It was the only way out.

Hal spent the remainder of the black hours drying his clothes. His immaculate flannels were now a brownish hue, spotted here and there with mud and wrinkled into a state that defied even the dry cleaner. And his shoes, once so trim and smart looking, were not recognizable because of several layers of clay which had dried upon them.

Just before a new day dawned in the jungle,

Hal groped his way through the dark to the scene of the wreck. He built a small fire there to give him light and proceeded to hunt about the framework for something which could be used as a spade. But that availed him nothing, and he was about to give up in despair when he happened to notice the trench which the crippled engine had burrowed as it fell. The propeller, he saw at once, had completely loosed itself in the impact and was lying a few feet distant.

Hal pulled it out of the mud and with it a frightened spider which ran across his hand, leaving a trail of poison which caused not only an intense burning but severe inflammation as well. In point of fact, all of Hal's jungle trials seemed to begin with that spider's infection.

He sucked out the poison as best he could and trudged back to the clearing with the propeller. Dawn found him using it as a spade with which to dig a last resting place for José Rodriguez, and if it was rather ineffectual as an instrument, it was none the less fitting that it should be used in preparing an airman's grave.

The sun was high in the east when Hal had

pounded the last bit of mire into place. Solemnly, then, he dug the propeller at its head and left it there as a marker. For a moment he stood glancing at his handiwork, feeling inexpressibly sad and without hope. His hand caused him much pain; he was weary from irregular sleep and his thirst knew no bounds.

The grave seemed to be the final gesture. It was his admission of lost hope and he voiced it aloud. Not a bit of use was there to scan the blue chink of sky. Carmichael was not to be the means of his rescue, he felt it just as surely as he felt thirst. What would be the means of his rescue, if at all, he could not feel. Indeed, the thought itself seemed to be swallowed up in the vague mists of the future.

He turned his back on the lonely grave, wrapped in despair. Nothing mattered much except that he get a drink of water, somewhere, somehow. He turned east, thinking that at least he was facing *Manaos* and if he was fortunate enough to keep going in that direction he would some day reach there.

"*Some day!*" Hal laughed bitterly. "It's like tomorrow, I guess—it never comes."

And as he stepped from the clearing into the

trackless maze of jungle, a beautiful yellow-breasted, black-coated bird warbled at his back with an insistence that Hal felt was nothing but mockery. Its cheerful whistling note he could not bear. It was decidedly out of place in that dismal solitude, he thought, as he turned to view the creature.

But he quickly changed his mind, however, when he saw that the silver-throated creature had hopped onto a limb of the tree that shadowed Rodriguez' grave. The bird seemed to defy all that was sad and with its graceful head to one side it poured out a medley of cheer in the trilling call, *pir-i-pi-pi, pir-i-pi-pi.* And strangest of all, the beautiful little creature seemed to be directing its efforts toward the silent mound beneath it.

Hal turned his back on the clearing for good and all, then. He could do it now with a heart less heavy. At least he would not have that contemptible feeling that he was leaving a fellow being in the eternal solitude of the jungle.

Rodriguez would never be alone.

CHAPTER XV

A DAY AND A NIGHT

HAL groped his way through another jungle day and just as the shadows began to creep through the forest he came upon an almost overgrown trail. He was overjoyed, for it was the first indication he had seen that something else besides animal life had trod that lonely region. Also, he could see in the deepening gloom that the foliage and trees became more attenuated from this point on.

Did it mean that he was approaching a settlement? Civilization? Even in his extreme joy he dared not hope for that much. But the anticipation of seeing a human being was quite enough. That and a drink of cool water was all he asked for.

His hand hurt him constantly and he found it difficult to use it at all. Consequently he went around picking up the wood for his fire with his left hand, which seemed to take him considerably longer. And when night closed

in he had only enough to burn for a few hours.

He decided to make the best of it—in point of fact, he felt too utterly weary and feverish to do otherwise. Just then he was powerless to do aught but spread out his flannel coat and lie down. The making of campfires was beginning to get on his nerves.

But he managed another fire, hoping against hope that it would be the last. He piled onto it all the wood that he had gathered, then lay down on the spread coat and thought over the day which he had just spent.

He had killed two fowls which meant two bullets less in his gun. Also he was down to two cigarettes and the same number of matches. It was a matter of necessity that he reach some sort of settlement that next day. A horrible chill shook him from head to foot, when he thought of what a time he would have if another day's tramping brought him no more than the day just closed.

Finally he got to sleep and tossed for two hours, dreaming horrible dreams. When he awakened, the fire was dead and he found himself besieged with mosquitoes. There was no brushing them off and even when he used up his next to the last match to light a cigarette

and smoke them out, he had little or no success.

The itch and sting of them drove him to distraction, and after an hour he gave up all thought of trying to sleep. Then for a long interval he paced up and down his little clearing with his coat pulled about his head. After that proved uncomfortable he decided to grope his way through the dark and take his chances. Anything to keep going.

He did.

He hadn't gone but five hundred feet when he remembered about the trail and its promise for the morrow. What was getting into him that he could forget that so soon? Was he delirious? Certainly he felt he would be if he couldn't sleep some more somewhere and rest his feverish, aching body. But the memory of the trail became very vivid, very promising then, and he decided not to go one step further.

And Hal's life rested on that decision, for he had hesitated upon that step. One foot, however, had already been plunged forward and he felt water close over it. In a moment he had drawn it back, trembling and shaken, for something had rubbed against it. And in

a nervous abandon he took out his last match, struck it against the little box and held it up to see that he had barely escaped certain death.

For the flickering light of the match showed him to be standing on the brink of a stagnant jungle pond. And lying on its slimy banks was a huge alligator blinking curiously at the tiny flame and occasionally opening its cavernous jaws.

The light went out, but Hal found his way back to the camp and he stayed there until dawning.

CHAPTER XVI

WITH THE MORNING

HAL was sick when daylight seeped in through the trees; he felt much too sick to do anything but stay right where he was. But the nearness of the pond housing an alligator, and the hope that the trail revived, did much toward giving him the strength and initiative to go on.

The trail skirted the pond, for which he was tremendously thankful. He gave it a furtive glance in passing, but there was nothing save a good-sized ripple on the slimy-green surface, and Hal decided that the monster must be taking his morning bath.

"And he can stay under until I get out of sight," Hal muttered savagely. "One look at that fellow will last me for a long, long time."

He trudged along, feeling more and more encouraged at the decided thinning out of the jungle. He felt freer, more like breathing

than when back in the dense forest, and the broad expanse of daylight in the heavens set his heart to beating faster.

He almost forgot that his body ached and that his head throbbed terribly. Fever racked him and his right hand was so swollen that it was practically useless. But there was always the trail winding in and out of the trees, lost one moment in a maze of bushes between the trees, then coming up again a few feet further on.

The sun came up in a vast red ball, and Hal could see its reflection now upon the shining leaves in the tree tops. He had stopped a moment to look at it, when he heard a sudden rustling noise in the distant bushes. He stepped up, realizing that it sounded like some heavy object plunging about in the undergrowth, and was about to withdraw instinctively, when there arose in the morning air a blood-curdling roar.

Before he had time to retreat, the bushes parted and out from them leaped a jaguar. Its spotted back reared high in the air and, with an infuriated squall, it came down at Hal's feet. An arrow sticking out of its thick neck told the story.

Obviously the animal was as much surprised as Hal, for it backed down a moment, crouching on its hind legs and swinging its tail with a great thumping sound each time it switched on the ground. But not for a moment did it take its savage eyes from the astonished young man before it.

Hal saw at once that the animal was suffering great pain from the arrow, but the wound was not mortal. Its frequent squalls betokened anger and revenge against all humanity, and, from the hard glint in its eyes, this retaliation would be thorough.

Hal did not stir from the spot, but, with a stealthy gesture, he reached around to his back pocket. The next second he had aimed the gun at a spot right between the jaguar's steely eyes, but his aim was poor with his left hand and he knew it. Consequently, the second the explosion occurred, he was fleeing toward the nearest tree.

Up the slimy trunk he clambered, but not before the animal reached out and clawed his right leg. Nevertheless, he hitched himself up, biting his lips with pain, and settled on the nearest bough. Meanwhile, the jaguar

was crawling after him, hissing and emitting blood-curdling cries.

Hal aimed the gun again, this time supporting it as best he could with his swollen right hand. The bullet sang, the jaguar screamed, and before its echo had died away in the tree tops, it fell with a terrific thud and rolled five or six feet before its spotted body became rigid in death.

For a long time, Hal stayed where he was, fearing that the cat might suddenly revive. But when ten minutes had passed and there was no sign of such a miracle, he carefully replaced the gun in his pocket and undertook to get down from his uncomfortable retreat.

He soon found that he could not use his leg at all and had to slide to the ground, blistering his good hand and feeling faint when he tried to stand upright. He reached out to support himself on the tree trunk but a wave of giddiness passed through his throbbing head and though he felt himself sinking he seemed not to be able to prevent it.

He found himself in a heap and seemed to have neither the strength nor the desire to do aught but stretch out and lie where he was.

Pain governed him now from head to foot and he feared for his wounded leg. But the fear soon gave way to a sort of apathy out of which he did not rise.

His eyes noted indifferently the sun climbing higher in the blue heavens. It gleamed quite strongly through the swaying branches and, in its glistening light, various-colored birds flitted about. Suddenly he saw something black moving with a familiar whirling motion.

They circled closer and closer to the tree tops, swaying with each revolution of their huge black bodies like some small army of the sky moving earthward as a single unit. There was a fascination in that continuous circling, Hal found—a rather dread fascination, and he vaguely remembered that the dead jaguar lay not fifteen feet from him.

Then when their black bodies barely skimmed the tree tops he bethought himself of his own physical condition. He knew he was getting weaker by the moment. Besides his wounded leg and infected hand, some strange fever seemed to be consuming him. Suddenly a horrible thought came to him.

Did it mean that he was destined to die in

that unholy spot? Did it mean that those gruesome scavengers of the air were waiting for that moment to arrive? Something was holding them off from descending upon the hapless jaguar—was it himself?

Hal shivered and shuddered, yet he hadn't the power to stir his body one inch. He could only lie there and stare at the black mass moving nearer and nearer, yet waiting, waiting . . . But suddenly they seemed to be rushing toward him—either that or he was rushing up toward them! But no, it was neither—he himself was sinking down, down . . .

Strange cries pierced the air then, cries that were not uttered by bird or animal or white man. Strange painted bodies moved in the brush, moved stealthily but surely, and black, questioning eyes peered out at the singular scene of a dead jaguar and a red-haired white man lying but fifteen feet apart.

CHAPTER XVII

A GUEST OF SAVAGES

After a few more minutes' observation, twenty-five naked savages crawled out of the brush, crept up to Hal's prostrate body and held a noisy conference. Then they took turns feeling his feverish brow and the irregular heart beats pounding beneath his powerful chest. Suddenly two of the warriors leaned down, one taking his head and the other his feet, and in solemn procession they marched off through the brush, leaving two of their number to skin the jaguar.

Evening came before Hal was conscious of anything. When he opened his eyes he could see the glow of many campfires. A deep gloom seemed to surround him, but sitting on either side were two Indian women, old and wrinkled, watching him with blinking eyes and tightly drawn lips.

He had a bitter taste in his mouth, an herb-like taste, but he felt not so feverish. Also,

when he went to raise his right hand he noticed that it was covered with a sort of claylike substance and the swelling was almost gone. His leg, too, felt easier and he saw, as he raised it into the firelight, that it was covered with the same substance that was on his hand.

Gradually he could pick out a row of pillars supporting the roof, and from each of these pillars he noticed a frail crossbar to the outer wall. Between each of these bars he saw Indians sleeping, men, women, and children. Some slept on skins or leaves and some on the bare ground. Before each of these groups a fire burned and Hal decided that each group was a family with their own distinct hearthfire burning before their apartments. Over all was a vast roof.

It occurred to Hal, then, that he was in an Indian *maloka,* one of those vast houses of thatch which the captain of the boat had told them housed the entire tribe. He was lying in one of the apartments at the rear, for the low, sloping roof he could have touched with his foot if he had had the strength to raise it.

A medley of snores resounded through the vast hut and from time to time he saw the squat figures of warriors replenishing their

fires, murmuring to each other for a moment or two, then retiring again to their apartments to sleep.

The Indian women guarding Hal watched him continuously while he was taking stock of his surroundings. Neither one spoke, but he caught a questioning look in the eyes of the older-looking hag and saw her dart behind him, bringing up a huge calabash filled with water.

She held it to his lips and Hal drank it greedily. It was warm and rather too sweet tasting but, nevertheless, water. Never in his life was he so grateful for anything, although he realized that they must have been feeding him water on and off through the day, for he felt not nearly so parched as when he lay under the tree that morning.

When the calabash was empty he looked up at the Indian woman and smiled his most brilliant smile.

"You spiggotty—no?" he asked softly, remembering how often he got some response from Panama Indians by means of that address.

But he might just as well have spoken to a stone statue, for the woman stared at him with

the same blinking eyes. After a moment she took the calabash and arose, waddling past the burning fires toward the front of the *maloka.*

Hal turned his eyes to the other Indian woman who was regarding him gravely from under half-closed lids. He used the same alluring smile upon her, but his earnest efforts were all in vain, for she continued to watch him with the same impassivity as before.

He closed his eyes after that and drowsed at intervals. In his waking moments he could feel the presence of his female guardians, but preferred to keep his eyes closed as long as they wouldn't speak to him. But on the whole, silence reigned in the vast *maloka* and now and again Hal could hear the night voices from the jungle.

Goatsuckers repeated their monotonous refrain by the hour and several times the eerie plaint of the sloth drifted faintly in on the breeze. The women dozed occasionally, as was evidenced by their sonorous breathing, but the moment Hal opened his eyes they seemed to awaken instinctively.

Then came a long interval when a hush seemed to have fallen over everything. Hal knew the women were dozing but he kept his

eyes closed, content to lie quiet and rest. He knew that curiosity would avail him nothing where an Indian was concerned. That much he had learned in Panama.

Consequently, when he heard the muffled scream of a human voice toward dawn, he did not stir. But the women were on the alert immediately, for he could hear them straighten up and lean over him. He feigned deep, even breathing, however, but continued to listen.

Another scream pierced the early morning darkness, echoing and reëchoing about the *maloka.* Suddenly the cry, though muffled, was more intelligible, and Hal was certain that it sounded like someone trying to call *"help,"* though he could not be sure. It was too muffled, too distant for him to distinguish anything definite.

In any event, the cry pierced the air for the third time, and, though it seemed ghostly and unhuman, its poignancy was distressing. Then all was still again, but Hal had been so startled that he found himself up resting on his elbow and staring hard at the women.

The elder of the two women stared back at Hal, then suddenly she got to her knees and

with her brown, bony hands made a number of gestures which the young man was at a loss to fathom. After a few moments of continued eerie, cowering gestures, he began to understand what she was trying to explain.

The cries he had just heard were ghostly, not human.

CHAPTER XVIII

CONVALESCENCE

HAL took no stock in that, of course, but, during the long nights of the week following, he was more than once inclined to be credulous in the matter. Not a night passed that he did not hear the sad cries issuing from some point beyond the *maloka.* And though he questioned both the women and the warriors who came and stared curiously at him, none could do more than shrug their shoulders and make meaningless gestures in answer.

Consequently, he was glad when his strength returned and enabled him to walk as far as the door of the *maloka.* Two young but stalwart warriors had now taken the place of his female guardians and on this first day of his convalescence they hovered about constantly, and he was at a loss to know whether it was because of their tender solicitude for his uncertain gait or whether they considered him a prisoner.

In any event, he got absolutely no encouragement from either warrior when he motioned them to show him where the weird night cries originated. They simply shrugged their shoulders and gestured in such a way as to indicate that the Indian considered the supernatural to be an evil manifestation and all evil was to be shunned.

But by and large, Hal got on not so badly with them. He had learned, after the first day, a series of gestures which indicated his wants, his likes, and his dislikes. To be sure, all the food they gave him, he disliked intensely, but as he was likely to starve unless he ate what was given him, he put a good face upon the matter and took what came as a rule. Also, he felt eternally grateful to them for having rescued him from a certain horrible death and nursed him back toward health.

Every few hours during the day the medicine man, a fat, pot-bellied old warrior, had come and sat at his side droning weird incantations over his recumbent body and making all sorts of fantastic gestures. Then he would proceed to delve into a calabash that he had brought with him, and bring out a smeary-looking mixture which he plastered on the

patient's wounded leg and hand. And before he terminated his visit he would raise another calabash to Hal's lips, nodding for him to drink deeply of the bitter, herb-tasting fluid which it contained.

Nevertheless, Hal continued to get better and, whether or not it was because of the medicine man's mysterious magic, he was quite able to hobble out of the *maloka* on the second day of his convalescence.

It was, of course, quite a gala day in the little settlement. Men, women, and children stood about in a staring circle to watch their guest emerge. All small of stature, they looked up with awe at Hal's towering physique and shock of red, curly hair.

He hobbled about the clearing, smiling brilliantly, though feeling dizzy and weak from his sickness and long confinement in the gloomy *maloka.* Nevertheless, he could not help smiling, for he felt ridiculous in his soiled and wrinkled flannels and a ten days' growth of golden beard.

For quite a time the natives continued to follow him about, but seemed to tire of it toward afternoon and went back to their various pursuits. Meanwhile, Hal saw something

A FAT MEDICINE MAN MADE ALL SORTS OF FANTASTIC GESTURES OVER HAL.

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that gladdened his heart—a river, which his guardians explained, with violent grunts and gestures, was a little river to the big river, or in other words, a small tributary.

The larger of the two Indians (his head just reached Hal's elbow), whom Hal dubbed "Big Boy," motioned to a canoe pulled up on the bank. After a series of gestures which represented a man paddling down the river, he looked straight up at the tall young man.

"You mean that canoe is for me?" Hal motioned the question. "For *me* to go back?" he added, pointing to himself and then to the river.

Big Boy nodded assent.

Hal partook of the evening meal with a little more relish than he ordinarily would. He sat with the tribe outside the *maloka* mincing on the unpalatable *beiju* pancakes, which were a distinctly Indian concoction, and thinking of the day near at hand when he could turn his face toward *Manaos*. He nibbled on the *pimenta,* with which *beiju* is always eaten, and forgot that it usually burned his civilized throat.

All his thoughts were on his uncle and how overjoyed he would be to know that he was

alive and well, after he had been given up for lost. For certainly he must be thought lost and dead. Even his mother must think it by now. His mother. . . .

Hal got up from the communal supper circle to be alone with the thought of his mother. The rest of the natives, busy appeasing their hunger, seemed not to notice him hobbling away toward the surrounding jungle, particularly his guards.

Hal did not seem to notice this relaxation of their guardianship. In point of fact, he thought nothing at all about it, so filled were his thoughts of the day on which he could get word to his mother that all was well with him.

He found the dimness of the jungle trail inviting and hobbled along deep in his own reflections. Tomorrow or the next day he would be well enough to start his journey, he felt sure of it. And he would leave the little settlement with a heart full of gratitude. Indeed, he had already tendered to the chief of the tribe his empty gun as a token of deep appreciation, and with much bowing and grunting, the gift was received in good spirit.

There was nothing to mar his joy then, so much did he appreciate recovering from the

fever. He stopped, stretched his long arms delightedly and happened to notice through the trees a small thatched hut. Before it, stretched out on the ground asleep, was one of the natives.

Several monkeys disported themselves on the branches of the tree over the hut and were about to pelt the sleeping native with some nuts. Hal tried to frighten them off by waving his long arms but they paid no heed. Instead they set up a chatter and let go a rain of the hard nuts which fortunately missed their intended victim and hit Hal instead.

"Ouch!" Hal cried as several of the nuts hit his tender head. "For the love of Mike!"

The words had barely been uttered when out of the gloomy hut came a heart-rending cry, muffled and unintelligible, yet full of poignancy and human wretchedness. Hal did not miss its pleading note—in point of fact, the utter misery of it seemed to make him powerless to do aught but wonder.

What was it?

CHAPTER XIX

A PRISONER

HAL had not time to consider this at all, for in a moment, it seemed, the natives had swarmed up from the clearing and surrounded him. And the native lying before the hut had gotten to his feet in an amazingly short time, producing a bow and arrow and looking as if he would use it on the slightest pretext.

Hal's pet guardian, Big Boy, stepped up to his side at this juncture and pulling him by the arm urged him back toward the clearing. He did so, willing but puzzled, and as he turned his back toward the hut, the same cry of misery broke out, pleading and utterly pathetic.

Hal stopped, hesitated, as if he were going to go back, when he noticed that a number of the warriors were following him with bows and arrows drawn. Big Boy, too, marching at his side, had acquired an exceedingly pugna-

cious expression on his usually bland countenance.

Straight back to the *maloka* they marched him, saw him safely to his apartment in the rear, then left Big Boy standing guard while they gathered in the front for a long and noisy conference.

Hal could make nothing out of the whole proceedings. He did not know what it was all about. Yet the uneasy thought recurred that it was not a promising sign to see naked savages following him about with drawn bows and arrows. They had not done so before. What did it mean now?

Had his presence before that strange hut incurred their enmity? And if so—why? Why should that wretched cry bring them swarming to his side and cause them to treat him as if he had committed some crime? Why?

Hal was to learn why, to his sorrow, and that the way of the Amazon Indian is indeed very strange.

In the meantime he was doing all in his power to get Big Boy in a spirit of good will. He coaxed and cajoled to find out why he was being guarded thus.

Big Boy, ever an admirer of Hal's powerful

physique and commanding grace, relaxed a little to motion that the warriors of the tribe were holding a pow-wow to ascertain what should be done about the incident before the hut.

"What about it?" Hal gestured with one of his sad-sweet smiles. "I have done nothing." He shrugged his shoulders and put his hands over his heart to show that he was innocent of any wrongdoing.

Big Boy melted enough to wriggle his hands in a way that conveyed to Hal the information that the spirits were offended. His going along the trail to the hut and hearing those cries made him a thing of evil. And to the Indian, evil was a thing to be shunned.

Through Big Boy's lucid mode of expression, Hal learned that a demented native occupied that hut, or rather he was incarcerated there as evidenced by the native guarding it. And a demented person, Big Boy explained by pounding his head vigorously, was unholy, evil. Thus the person upon whom this evil one cries also becomes evil.

"And so all you guys think I'm evil, huh?" Hal asked, gesticulating wildly and pounding his broad chest.

Big Boy nodded.

"What can they do about it?" Hal persisted, feeling not a little uneasy.

Big Boy shrugged his shoulders in answer and Hal could get nothing more out of him for quite a while. He went to sleep and slept for an hour. When he awakened, he saw that his wrist watch was being curiously inspected by the Indian.

"Like?" Hal motioned, sitting up.

Big Boy nodded, then, with a grave shake of the head, sat down alongside of Hal.

The tribe, Hal noticed, were all settled for the night in their apartments. No one but him and the Indian were awake at that moment. One could have heard the proverbial pin drop when Big Boy suddenly motioned to his bow and arrow.

For the next five minutes he enacted with pantomimical accuracy just what was going to take place in the settlement at dawn. He pointed first in the direction of the jungle hut, then he pointed toward the chief who was lying a few apartments distant, sound asleep. Big Boy mimicked that powerful personage by making a grave face and shaking a sagacious finger at Hal. Next he silently waved

his arms, indicating all the sleeping warriors in the *maloka,* then pointed toward the heavens as a final gesture.

Hal comprehended it all, and he almost wished that he hadn't, for it wasn't terribly comforting news.

For his stroll through the jungle trail and the evil that the warriors believed had been visited upon the tribe through Hal, the sagacious chief had pronounced sentence on their white guest. That sentence condemned Hal to death at dawn—death by bow and arrow at the hands of the tribe's picked warriors.

Hal shivered and glanced at his young captor a moment. The young man must have some liking for him, else why did he tell him all this? Could he use Big Boy's liking and hero worship to his own advantage?

He tried, using all the wit and cunning that he could muster. Smiles, pleading looks, and even a cajoling shake of his captor's shining shoulder which Hal followed up by thrusting his wrist watch under Big Boy's nose. And that did the trick.

The Indian nodded his head, pleased, and

sat as still as a mouse while Hal fastened the watch on his left wrist. When it was adjusted he indulged in a smile, moving his hand back and forth to see the glow of the radium-faced dial in the gloom of the *maloka.* He was like a child with a toy.

Hal waited long enough for him to enjoy it, then nudged him warningly. Time was fleeting, the fires were burning and every warrior was deep in sleep. From past observation he knew that such utter silence did not long reign in the *maloka.* He would have to act and act quickly.

Big Boy rose and motioned his captive to follow stealthily. Hal followed obediently, but never in his life did he seem to make more noise. The warriors, however, did not hear it, for no one stirred throughout the length of the *maloka.* Then they reached the door.

A full moon was coming up and Big Boy motioned Hal to walk close to the trees. He walked out in full view of the clearing, however, his dark shining body glistening with every stride. At intervals he stopped, listened intently, then pattered on toward the river.

They came out on the banks without incident, in the full light of the moon. The canoe was there—the canoe which the chief had decided was not to take the white young man back to civilization. But Big Boy had decided otherwise, and he motioned Hal to hurry, pushing the frail-looking craft well out into the stream.

Hal got in without a word or a sound. He turned, putting out his hand in gratitude to the young Indian lad who was saving his life, but was surprised to see that Big Boy had also clambered in the canoe and had taken up one of the paddles preparatory to departure.

He only nodded to Hal's inquiring look and with a few rapid strokes put considerable distance between themselves and the settlement. Then he held up his hand on which the wrist watch was fastened, and shook his head darkly.

Hal understood and it made him feel mean. But Big Boy would not have it so. He smiled reassuringly to his white friend as if to tell him that it did not matter. He may have earned the eternal condemnation of the spirits and of his people by helping the evil-stricken white man to escape, but had he not gained a

wrist watch and a friend? That was the gist of his violent gestures.

Hal shrugged his shoulders, but he was touched by Big Boy's devotion. Truly, the way of the Amazon Indian was strange.

CHAPTER XX

THE PASSING OF BIG BOY

HAL helped Big Boy paddle for two hours, but he was so completely exhausted at the end of that period that he had to stretch himself out in the bottom of the craft. The Indian nodded understandingly and pointed to his white friend's head as if to say that he knew all along what toll the fever had taken of his strength. Very wisely he had reckoned that his tall friend could not stand the strain of the journey alone.

Hal put out his hand and gave the Indian an affectionate slap. His gratitude knew no bounds, for he realized more than ever that Big Boy's decision to come with him had been actuated by a high and noble motive, the desire to help a fellow being weakened by fever. And no one knew better than the Indian how weak his friend would be.

Hal was so deeply affected by this realization that he determined never to let Big Boy

out of his sight, never in his life. And during the long night hours, though there was not a word spoken, nor a hand moved in gesture, they found a mutual contentment in each other's company.

The moon slipped down behind the clouds after midnight and they paddled through the remaining dark hours. At dawn they came to a deserted settlement and agreed to get something to eat before going further. Big Boy motioned that the rest of the journey was going to be strenuous and that they needed all the nourishment they could get.

He proved himself to be ingenious in the matter of catching fish with his bow and arrow. And Hal watched him with something like awe when he got a fire out of two sticks just by rubbing them together for an amazingly short time.

Big Boy did the honors of cooking the fish also, and Hal had nothing to do but sit down and help him eat them when they were finished broiling. Needless to say he did justice to the Indian's culinary accomplishments.

Hal noticed, however, that Big Boy's appetite could top his own by a pretty wide margin. In point of fact, he seemed to stuff, rather than

eat, and washed down the whole with tremendous draughts of river water. However, he seemed contented and not at all distressed by any thoughts of indigestion, and greeted his white friend's questioning look with a merry shake of his flat, black head.

After setting out again they paddled but a half hour when they came to a waterfall and were confronted with the necessity of portage. For two hours they struggled through the jungle with the canoe and came at last to a stretch of smooth water.

But their good fortune was not lasting, for a half hour found them confronting a series of rapids. Hal insisted upon doing his share and took up a paddle, protesting that the breakfast of fish had given him all the strength he needed for the task.

They raced through the first without incident, but before attempting the second, a dangerous looking one, they held a sort of pow-wow. Hal was decidedly against it, but Big Boy, by means of guttural grunts and sounds, assured him that the thing could be accomplished with careful paddling.

Consequently, they set out and, from the very first, experienced hectic moments. For

a few hundred yards the rocky cliffs compressed the river-channel to a narrow gorge. Through this the water angrily forced its way, venting its fury by sending up foaming spray and high, lashing waves.

Big Boy motioned Hal at this juncture that he would do the paddling alone, and as if on second thought he removed the wrist watch and gave it to his friend. With a grin he motioned toward the spray foaming in the gorge and shook his black head vociferously as if to say that he was loath to get the watch wet.

Hal laughed and put it in his pocket for safe-keeping. The next second they were headed for the gorge, shooting through it with lightning speed. But halfway through, a wave struck the fail craft, water poured in, and before they were able to bail it out, another wave caught them and turned them completely over.

Hal came up under the overturned canoe and rapidly swam from under. Once on the surface he looked about and saw that the Indian had been carried quite a little distance downstream.

Hal called vociferously and swam rapidly, but the nearer he got the stronger was the con-

viction that Big Boy was not as he should be. He seemed to be floundering about in the current and, as the motion of the water swirled him about, it was quite obvious from his expression that he was unable to swim.

Cramps! Hal guessed it in a moment when he saw the Indian's pale lips and pain-contorted face. He was paying the penalty for a huge breakfast.

Hal called to him, motioned to him to hold on, but the Indian looked to be sinking. Too, he was in the very heart of the current which was gradually bearing him down to the torrent below. By this time, however, his would-be rescuer was rapidly approaching the spot, endangering his own life in the attempt.

Two waves in succession caught the Indian at this point and, just as Hal stretched out to grasp him, he was carried out of reach and plunged into a whirlpool. Conscious that there was no further hope, he lifted his black head in smiling resignation, then was churned out of sight by the roaring force of the water.

Hal cried out in despair, but just at that moment the floating canoe came past and he reached out and grasped it.

HAL AND BIG BOY WERE THROWN OUT OF THE CANOE.

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CHAPTER XXI

A JUNGLE VISION

By sheer determination, Hal forced the stubborn craft back into position and, paddling with his bare hands, he managed to emerge safely at the other end. Once there, he had no heart to go further and pulled into the bank to rest and reflect upon the Indian's sad passing.

It was the saddest experience of his life, he thought as he clambered up on the bank and sat down. Sadder even than Rodriguez' death, for the Brazilian was but an acquaintance, while the Indian had proved himself the best friend a fellow could have. And what was worse, he felt that he himself was responsible, for the young man would never have come to such grief if he hadn't left his people.

After an hour of these vain regrets he hobbled down just below the rapids, but there was no sign of the Indian's body. Watch as he

did, he saw nothing but the foaming spray as it roared down the rapids. Big Boy's brave, faithful countenance Hal never saw again—not even in death.

He limped on downstream, despondent and irresolute. The canoe was no good to him without a paddle, the Indian was gone . . . Fate, he decided, was taking an awful whack at him and he resented it. He had planned so much to repay Big Boy—he had even painted mind pictures of taking him home to his mother in Ramapo, N. Y. There in the shadow of the undulating hills he would have looked quite picturesque. But now it could never be, and the sad part of it was that he had not been given the slightest chance to show Big Boy his deep gratitude.

Suddenly Hal thought of the watch and he took it out of his pocket, looked at it a moment, then put it back on his own wrist with a wistful smile. It had been a queer give and take between them, yet he was glad that it had been so. Until the longest day he lived, he would always think of the watch as a farewell token of the Indian's.

A macaw, gorgeously plumed, flew over his head, and further down along the bank he

noticed that the jungle thinned out. That always meant a clearing, so he hesitated for a time, drawing back under the trees and listening. He would not, he determined, walk into any cannibal camps with his eyes closed.

He listened for fully five minutes and then suddenly noticed something golden flitting in and out of the trees below. Emboldened, he hurried on until he saw that it was not a mirage, but a real white girl with a crown of lovely golden hair who was running along the bank.

Hal's heart seemed to come up in his mouth then. He wanted to call right away, but he seemed powerless to do aught but stand and stare at her slim figure swaying along under her flowing, old-fashioned skirt. And when she turned to look out over the river, he noticed that her feet were quite small, despite the clumsy canvas shoes she wore.

He thought of his own appearance then, bedraggled and unkempt. And though his ruined sport shoes were unsightly indeed, he felt really more conscious of his terrible growth of beard. Not being able to see himself, he visualized his appearance as being nothing short of disgraceful. Certainly, he

was not fit to show himself before such a vision as that girl was who was standing on the bank.

And so in disgust, Hal was about to hide himself until she had gone, but he was just too late. She caught sight of him, hesitated with wonder, then started toward him on a run.

With a graceful bow, Hal hurried toward her, also, and steeled himself for the worst under a critical, feminine eye. But he was destined to be surprised, for she seemed not to notice any deficiency in his attire. Indeed, her first observation was quite unexpected.

"*A white man*—my goodness!" she exclaimed in a voice that was husky, yet not harsh. "My goodness!"

"Just what I was going to say," Hal returned, blushing consciously under his beard. "A white girl—my goodness!"

They both laughed, then she cupped her tanned face in her right hand and searched Hal's face eagerly. He noted at once that her eyes were gray.

"You've been hurt—sick—lost?" she asked solicitously.

"All three," Hal admitted with a chuckle.

"I don't know where I've been, where I am, or where I'm headed for, but I do know that it's darn sweet music to see a white girl in this wilderness and hear her talking the English language. *Gosh!*"

She laughed, huskily sweet.

"You're not by any chance that person whom all the Amazon is being searched for—Hallett Keen?"

"Now I know the reason they haven't found me," Hal laughed. "If they're searching for me with that name to go by, I wouldn't care if I was ever rescued."

"Then you are *he?*"

"Not Hallett—*Hal!* Hal Keen is the only name my dog knows, and what's good enough for my dog is good enough for me. So I'm Hal Keen, by your leave, young lady."

"Oh, I'm so happy to meet you, Hal Keen," she said laughing, but none the less sincere. "I really am. Particularly am I glad to know you're alive. Word came through here four days ago that we were to watch out for a young man of your description, and here you are! Think of it!" Then, solicitously: "You're pale and shaken looking, Mr. Hal—why, you're not well!"

"Better than I've been in a week," Hal assured her. "I've been through an awful lot," he said, telling her the story of Big Boy.

She listened attentively while he talked, and, when he had finished, regarded him gravely.

"I've an idea you've been through a great deal more than even that."

"Some," Hal smiled winningly. "But there's plenty of time to talk about my adventures—it'll take me too long now. What I want to know is who you are and why, where are we, and why?"

"It would take too long to tell you why," she laughed with gentle mockery, "but I can tell you where we are, first. We're on the banks of the *Pallida Mors,* known as *River of Pale Death,* also *Death River.* It was so called by an Italian scientist who lost his party in the rapids just about where your Indian boy was lost. And as for me, I'm just Felice Pemberton and I live . . ."

"Did you say *just?*" Hal interrupted her.

CHAPTER XXII

FELICE AND HAL

INSTINCTIVELY they sat down together on the bank. Hal, though weary, was not hungry nor suffering pain of any kind, and if he had been, he secretly thought that just talking to the flower-like Felice would drive it away.

"I heard about you—in fact, I heard about your whole family," Hal told her. "My uncle and I listened to the story from the captain on the boat to *Manaos.*"

"Not a cheerful story, I'm afraid," she said wistfully.

"That's why I made up my mind right then and there to pay you people a visit," Hal said impulsively. "Funny, how I wanted to do that right away when I heard what hard luck you folks have had. But I didn't think I'd bust in this way—gosh!"

Her gray eyes twinkled as she regarded him.

"I'm glad to have you too, Mr. Hal," she said earnestly, "but I'm sorry you had to go

through so much to get here. Grandfather will send one of the Indians down to let your uncle know you're safe. But just as soon as you rest, we'll walk down and get you into a hammock where you can sleep and recuperate. We don't have beds up here," she added with a note of apology; "we live very simply."

"Say, a hammock will feel like a feather bed after what I've been sleeping on," Hal assured her breezily.

"So the *Pallida* Indians captured you?" she inquired, interested.

"That what they're called?"

"By us," she smiled. "They're a sort of mixture. *Pallida* identifies them sufficiently. They're terribly warlike and superstitious."

"Well, they were kind enough to me at the go-off. I was in pretty bad shape when they found me—they nursed me back. That is, a fat old medicine man did, and from the way I got well, I guess he's not all fake. But then they were willing to shoot poisoned arrows into me after going to all the trouble of making me well. If you savvy that, I don't."

She laughed, and got him to tell her the story at the Indian settlement right from the beginning.

"I know about their superstition," she told him when he had finished, "but I didn't think they'd go to such an extreme as they tried with you. I've heard about the demented native, though. They keep him imprisoned in that hut in the jungle and none of the tribe will go toward it, face forward. They back toward it in order to keep the evil spirit from afflicting them. It does seem awful and odd, but it's their native and their business, and nobody interferes. They never bother us, never in all these years. And they wouldn't bother to come after you; don't worry. Particularly, because one of their number came away with you."

"Poor fellow," Hal said thoughtfully. "I wouldn't have had it happen for the world. He deserved a better fate, believe me."

"It seems that is the way with those we love," said Felice with a poignancy that did not escape Hal.

"I know," he said sympathetically. "I heard about your father from the captain, too. It was included in the story. What a tough break for him, huh?"

"Not only for him, but for all of us. You see, he had finally come to the conclusion that

he was on the verge of a big discovery. He had kept it quiet, being afraid that it would prove disappointing. Consequently, we have never been able to find out just where the lode was. That it contained some gold was proven by the dust he brought home. The last trip he made was to decide just how much metal the lode would yield and if it would be worth while to go on."

"And it was up this river—the *Pallida Mors?*"

"Yes," Felice answered wistfully, "our river of pale death. We were to leave this wilderness and live in civilization if Father's expectations were realized. I went to school in Rio; we thought of going there to live."

"And how a girl like you must like to live in Rio," Hal said, looking around.

"But we have neither the money, nor the heart. You heard, I suppose, that none of us shall leave here for good until Father's body is recovered?"

"Yes. But that's making things awfully hard for yourselves, isn't it? In a river where there's rapids . . ."

"I know," she said with a sigh. "We've discussed that times without number. But we

always come to the conclusion that Father was seized with one of those uncanny premonitions that should be given serious thought. He had a fear that something was going to happen to him and he had a fear that his dead body would be left unprotected, something . . . we've not been able to guess why he had that fear. In any event, we've waited ten years—we're too poor to do other than stay where we are and we're conscience free that we haven't gone away from the region where Father died, leaving him alone. Even though we haven't found him we feel better about it than if we had gone away."

"I suppose you do," Hal agreed thoughtfully. "But it's tough on you, Miss Felice."

The girl's face lighted up with a radiant smile.

"Not a bit," she said cheerfully. "I've Grandfather to look after right now and just when I was beginning to worry, along you came. And there's a lot of you to come along, Mr. Hal," she added slyly. "When I first spied you, I was inclined to think it was a jaguar moving in the bushes; you backed away so, I was startled. The brownish color of your suit and the flash of your hair in the sunlight

seemed terribly like the creature until I saw your vast height popping out of the bushes."

"Gosh, a jaguar wouldn't be so bold as to come out on the river bank, right in the daylight?"

"If we are to believe the story the *Pallidas* circulated, the jaguar runs and cries at unexpected times. Especially the jaguar in whom they believe my father has been reincarnated. They say he runs up and down these river banks trying to lead us to his body and that he has been caught beneath one of the rapids. Of course, it's absurd, but I am always startled when I hear the cry of a jaguar or see one flash through the brush."

"They know about how you're waiting to get your father's body then, huh?"

"Of course. Indians have a way of gossiping among themselves, the same as the white men. And as they're so terribly superstitious I suppose it pleased their fancy to make up the jaguar story out of that ghostly cry that sounds up in their region at night."

"And this fabled jaguar is supposed to have a human voice, huh?"

"Yes, how do you know, Mr. Hal?"

"I heard it myself. It's queer, darn queer . . ."

"That's what my brother Rene has said."

"*Rene?* Gosh, I'll always like that name on account of a swell fellow I met. His last name was Carmichael."

"That's odd, Mr. Hal. My brother's middle name is Carmichael."

"Well, I'll be darned. That's not too odd to be a coincidence, Miss Felice. Let's get together on this."

And they did.

CHAPTER XXIII

SOME TALK

HAL acquainted Felice Pemberton with the facts of his acquaintance with the spies, Goncalves and Pizella. Then he launched onto the topic of his meeting with Rene Carmichael, and told her in detail all that had transpired up to the point where they had said farewell.

"That fits my brother," said the girl worriedly. "It's *got* to be him, for who else is blond and gray-eyed with that name in this desolate region? And if he said he would get help to you, you may be certain he would have done so if it was humanly possible. But we haven't seen him."

"Then aren't you worried about him?"

"Not yet," the girl replied cheerfully. "You see he is something of an adventurer like yourself. Only he roams about Brazil picking up odd jobs here and there to support Grandfather and myself. We don't hear

from him for intervals. What worries me is that he didn't get help for you."

"Let that be the least of your troubles," Hal assured her. "Perhaps he did. Anyway, I'm safe—and how!"

She smiled and got to her feet.

"Now to let Grandfather meet you," she said quietly. "He'll like you because of your liking for Rene, but I can't say he'll be terribly courteous. You see, he's not outgrown the bitterness my great-grandfather brought down here from the war."

"That's right," said Hal, following her along the narrow trail. "That was your great-grandfather, Marcellus Pemberton, huh? Well, he wasn't to be blamed for feeling bitter. Pride. But your grandfather Marcellus; he shouldn't . . ."

"All he knows about Yankees he learned from great-grandfather Marcellus," Felice said whimsically, "and that wasn't very complimentary from all accounts. So he's not to be judged on his merits or demerits." She laughed. "Rene and I are long enough out of that generation not to care what the Yankees did. So was my father. He was all for going back to the United States—to Virginia."

"That's right, you people originally hail from Virginia, huh? Well, it's a lovely state. You wouldn't go wrong in going back."

"Wouldn't we?" she asked wistfully and seemed to consider it. "What is the U. S. like, Mr. Hal?"

"The kind of a place that you criticize when at home, but miss it like the dickens when you go away. Anyway, she's not so bad as countries go, Miss Felice. It's fine for girls."

"*Girls!*" she repeated softly. "It must be fine. Rio is nice, but no doubt Virginia is nicer."

"And safer," said Hal, looking about the lonely place.

"If you could only tell Grandfather that as convincingly as you've told me," she sighed.

She glanced up at Hal and he noticed that, despite her tanned face, there was a pinched look about her that indicated uncertain health. And he wondered that she had any health at all for having lived all her young life in that jungle wilderness.

Felice Pemberton, Hal decided, was meant to live in the United States and nowhere else.

CHAPTER XXIV

OLD MARCELLUS

MARCELLUS PEMBERTON, the third, greeted Hal courteously, yet coldly. White-haired and rugged, he welcomed his guest with all the pompous grace of the old southern aristocracy. He promised to dispatch an Indian toward *Manaos* at once, then sniffing airily asked what part of "Yankee-land" the stranger had come from.

Hal took it in good part and smiled. There wasn't a Yankee-land any longer, he informed the old man. The United States was one; all those abiding there were Americans. Yankee was an almost obsolete word.

"Not for the spirit of the Old South," said Old Marcellus defiantly. "We of the jungle are free men and not to be driven out of our homes by those who do not agree with our political and personal views. We can stay here until we die—we have our Indian servants . . ."

"Slaves?" Hal interposed, looking about at the ragged-looking Indians moving in and out of their miserable thatched huts.

"An ageless and honorable custom if one treats one's slaves like human beings," said the old man coldly. "I treat mine as best I can after all these years of poverty. Misfortune and hardship can come to any man, even to the free man of the jungle." He said this last as if to reassure himself that he believed what he had said.

"Misfortune comes to all of us at some time or other, Mr. Pemberton," Hal said politely. "I've had a touch of it myself, and I'm feeling rather low down just now. By your leave, I'll rest until the old vim and vigor come back."

Old Marcellus was the soul of hospitality despite his prejudices. To slight a guest on his property was the last thing in the world he would care to do, whether that guest was a hated Yankee or no. And, with Hal's admission of indisposition, all his innate courtesy came to the fore. He poured out apologies profusely, and bade his granddaughter show their guest his quarters.

"Such as they are," she smiled, as she led

Hal to a rude hut next to their own. "But it's the best we have to offer—we reserve it especially for infrequent guests."

She led Hal through a low, narrow opening and nodded at the single chair, the hammock and the washbasin on an old-fashioned stand. It was primitive, but scrupulously neat and clean.

"Things have just gone along so-so with we Pembertons," she explained apologetically. "It's impossible to grow much more than potatoes here. We raise chickens and a half mile from here we can get all the pineapples you want to eat."

"Boy!" Hal exclaimed. "That sounds darn good to me—just like home. And chicken? Young lady, I'm your friend for life. You don't happen to drink such luxurious beverages as tea and coffee, do you?"

"Through Rene's generosity we allow ourselves that luxury," she smiled. "This property yields us no income whatsoever, Mr. Hal. And it yields but half of our food."

"Then why on earth do you people stay here?" Hal asked, flinging himself down on the chair.

"Grandfather again," said the girl wist-

fully. "It was here that we found Father's canoe and camping outfit, but no lode. And Grandfather, bound as he is to memories and to the dim, dead past, had us pack up and leave our more comfortable quarters thirty miles below here and come live on this poverty-stricken site. He said that if Father had died here, we should live here in his memory. A queer man is my grandfather, Mr. Hal. He's old and I respect him—indeed, I wouldn't think of being aught but obedient to his every wish. Still, I cannot help thinking that his bitterness is not good."

"Bitterness is terrible," Hal agreed. "But one thing, it hasn't affected you and that's good."

"I've seen too much of it. It hasn't affected my brother Rene, except in a political way. Grandfather's ideas about free men in the jungle has affected him, but that's all. He's come to believe that the jungle man should rebel and take part of the earnings of his more fortunate brother in the cities."

"What a strange, struggling family you are!" Hal said, watching the girl's sad, piquant face. "Memories and the past are all right as long as they don't interfere with the

happiness of the present, huh? I bet you think that way, don't you, Miss Felice?"

"I do, Mr. Hal," she admitted, "but you're the first one to whom I've confessed it."

"Then it's safe with me," Hal said whimsically, "and what's more it's better on my chest than on yours. I'm glad I came along to relieve you of the burden, honest I am."

"And I'm glad you came along too. Rene stays away so long sometimes. It gets rather dull."

"Not when I'm around," Hal chuckled, and looked down at the girl intently. "There's something about me, my uncle always says, that seems to whoop things up wherever I go. He says I'm not in a place very long before things just naturally begin to happen. So if that holds good here too, Miss Felice, just sit tight and hope for the worst."

She laughed heartily and, shaking her finger playfully at Hal, stepped outside.

"The worst can't be too bad for me," she called back over her slim shoulder. "The worst would be better than just this!"

And by that same token did Felice Pemberton invite the long arm of destiny into that little settlement on the *River of Pale Death.*

CHAPTER XXV

AFTER DINNER

HAL reveled in the luxury of a hammock that long afternoon and slept the sleep of the righteous. He awakened, feeling fresh and stronger than any time since the plane wreck. And to add to his delight, Mr. Pemberton's favorite Indian, Joaquim, was standing patiently at the door proffering shaving materials and a change of clothes including a worn but clean pair of khaki knickers.

"The Señor Rene's," the Indian explained as he held out the knickers. "Señor will fit—no?"

"Yes—sure. Rene's not so much shorter than I. And I bathe in the river, huh, Joaquim?"

"Yes, Señor. But watch for the electric fish. They send shock and sometimes people die from it."

"Well, I've got enough electricity in me

without clashing with those fish, Joaquim. Thanks for the tip, anyway."

And so he bathed without incident, shaved and dressed, then strolled toward the Pemberton hut, a broad, low structure of mud and thatch. Felice and her grandfather were on hand to greet him.

The building boasted of three good-sized rooms, that is, it was one vast room partitioned off into three. Two of the partitions, Felice explained, were used as bedrooms and the third, a wide room across the front of the hut, was their dining-living room.

That room, into which Hal was ushered, boasted of a fair-sized dining table, a half-dozen rickety chairs, an antique sideboard, and a dilapidated couch. The kitchen, Felice explained, was in Joaquim's hut and under his own supervision.

They sat down to a nicely set table and Hal perceived that Felice's slim brown hand had given the extra touches in honor of a guest. A worn but clean tablecloth gleamed under the candlelight, and the silver, he was certain, had graced the table of many generations of Pembertons in Virginia.

Hal ate his fill of chicken, fish, sweet po-

tatoes, cooling pineapple, and two cups of coffee. True, it was rather bitter and was flavored with condensed milk, but coffee had never been so welcome and he sat sipping the second cup with some Brazilian cigarettes which Old Marcellus kept for guests.

The old man was pleasant, and he beguiled Hal with divers tales of his experiences in the Amazon jungle. Now and then a note of bitterness would creep into his feeble voice, but upon looking at Hal's smiling countenance he would dismiss his subject and begin on another. But always he seemed to come back to the same subject, that of his long missing son.

His days and nights, the whole of his remaining life was spent thinking of that tragic affair. Hal's heart went out to him and he wondered what his life would have been—what all their lives would have been if that terrible thing hadn't happened!

Felice had sat quietly through her grandfather's long recital. Finally she sat up straight in her chair and shook her small, golden head determinedly.

"Now Grandfather," she said, "Mr. Hal has been hearing our story ever since he came up the river to *Manaos*. Suppose we let him

have an end to this Phantom of Death River and change to a lighter vein."

"Of course, Felice," said Old Marcellus. "No doubt the young man is terribly bored. I forget myself and talk, talk, talk."

"Not at all, not at all," Hal assured them. "I lean toward things like this—I mean toward the supernatural. Of course I don't take any stock in it that Miss Felice's father is roaming around and screaming in jaguar form. I don't believe that at all, but the idea fascinates me."

"That's because you're a romanticist, Mr. Hal," said the girl. "If you weren't, you wouldn't get into a scrape like that plane business. It pays to beware of strangers, especially men like Señor Goncalves. He must be a very cold-blooded man to have devised such a scheme. I've told Grandfather how you met him on your way to *Manaos* and the subsequent events."

"Granting all that," said Old Marcellus, "I can't understand why the Señor should want to take your uncle's life and your own. Why?"

"That's what I wanted to ask, but didn't," Felice said smiling.

"And I forgot to tell you," Hal explained.

"You are people of honor and I can entrust to you the secret of my uncle's mission up here. He's a secret service man and he brought me along with him on the exciting chase of a munition's smuggler. That is, he's trying to help the Brazilian Government, in coöperation with our own, to trace the smuggling of munitions to this country. And if we find the man who's the go-between on this end, we'll soon learn who the manufacturers are in the U. S."

"And is the man—*Renan?*" asked Old Marcellus softly.

"Do you know him?" Hal returned eagerly.

Before they could answer, Joaquim appeared in the doorway, gesticulating to his master and looking quite perturbed.

CHAPTER XXVI

A FAMILIAR VOICE

"WHAT is it, Joaquim?" asked the old man.

Joaquim's tongue loosed in rapid-fire Portuguese for fully two minutes. Felice sat tense, her hands clenching the tablecloth and her face noticeably pale. And the old man, though apparently quite calm, had two patches of color that came and went at intervals in his bony cheeks.

When the Indian had finished Old Marcellus stood up, talked crisply in Portuguese, then dismissed the servant. That done, he turned to Hal.

"Just some visitors, young man," he said courteously. "You will excuse me?"

"Of course," Hal said smiling. "I've been taking up your time too long anyhow."

"No doubt you feel fatigued still?" Felice asked in a strained manner.

Hal was not a little surprised but he managed to conceal it.

"I can always sleep, Miss Felice," he said

with a chuckle. "That's why I've grown up to be such a big boy."

She giggled, but grew instantly serious as he said goodnight. Old Marcellus bowed gravely and showed almost too palpably that he would feel immensely relieved when his guest was gone to his hut.

Hal felt the situation as one of his temperament feels everything—*intensely*. He knew that there was some deep, underlying motive for the strange behavior of his host and hostess. Too, he knew that the sudden visitors whom Joaquim announced must have given them cause for deep concern.

"But then that's their business," Hal told himself as he strolled toward the hut. "Why should it have anything to do with me? It's been said that every family keeps a skeleton or two hidden in the closet. Maybe this is the night that the Pembertons are letting theirs out for a walk."

Hal had quite forgotten the incident by the time he got into his hammock and under the net so solicitously provided by Joaquim. He was sleepier than he realized and after smoking another of Old Marcellus' Brazilian cigarettes, he closed his eyes willingly.

He thought over all that had happened during the day, particularly his meeting with Felice. He liked saying her name aloud. There was something soft and soothing in the sound. He thought of her frailness and thin, pinched cheeks and immediately he wanted to do something for her that would make her look bright and healthy, not sad and weary-looking as he visualized her then.

He had a mind picture of her laughing along some unfrequented trail in Ramapo, whose picturesque hills took on its winter cloak when the Amazon was at its highest temperature. She would look pretty, he decided, when the wind blew hardest and the snow flew thickest. There wasn't the slightest doubt about it—Felice belonged in Ramapo and he determined to tell her so.

Suddenly his thoughts switched to the immediate present. His uncle would soon hear that he was safe, and so would his mother. At last! His next move was to start back for *Manaos*. But as he had been gone this long he could defer it a few days, as long as no one was worrying about him.

The Pembertons interested him too much to leave right off. He chuckled. The Pember-

tons? Why fool himself! It was Felice who interested him and he knew that it was especially so because of the glamour of mystery surrounding her life in the wilderness.

In any event, he was inspired to do something manly and adventurous for this frail wilderness flower. And to sleep he went, with this generous and noble desire making peaceful his deep slumber.

That it was deep, Joaquim witnessed when he crept stealthily under the doorway of the hut of their honored guest. Soundlessly he stole up to Hal's hammock and listened intently for fully five minutes to his soft, even breathing. Then, with a satisfied air, the Indian stole out again.

Hal, however, being temperamental, was often disturbed by another's mere presence. It was so in this case, for he was awake and sitting up in his hammock before Joaquim's stealthy figure had cleared the doorway. And though he was still dazed, he knew that the Indian's presence was a sign that Old Marcellus and his granddaughter were up to something.

Hal got into his clothes in a minute and crept cautiously toward the door. He stood

and listened there before he emerged and even then put out his head and looked about carefully.

There was no sound except the low murmur of voices from Pemberton's hut. He could not distinguish them at all and proceeded to move further out into the clearing when he suddenly saw Joaquim's squat figure move out of the shadows and down toward the river.

Hal moved noiselessly up to the Pemberton hut and drew close into its protecting shadows. Old Marcellus was talking in even tones, calm and distinct.

"Yes," he was saying, "this used to be a *Pallida* settlement. Why do you ask, Señor?"

"Curiosity, Señor Pemberton," said a soft, purring voice. "And your son, his canoe, his camp was found here—no?"

"Yes. But surely you heard the story many times."

"Not so thoroughly as I heard it lately, Señor. And the *Pallidas* they did not come back to claim their settlement?"

"No," answered Old Marcellus. "It's their custom not to reclaim a settlement once they're driven off by a white man. They have a reputation for superstition you know."

"But your son, he drove them off, eh?"

"Yes; he believed there was a lode somewhere here worth a fortune. But poor man, he gave his life for that illusion. My grandson and I have hunted the length and breadth of this clearing in vain."

"Ah, but that is the way of life, eh, Señor? Now we must be going."

"But did you come only to ask me about my poor lost son? Have you no *message?*" Old Marcellus asked anxiously.

"None, Señor. Perhaps when next I come. *Adios!*"

Hal waited to hear no more and scooted back to the shadow of his doorway. Soon he saw the dark figures of men emerging from Pemberton's hut and he heard the soft whisper of voices. Old Marcellus he distinguished by his white, silvery hair, but the rest he could not make out. Besides, Joaquim's squat body came wobbling up from the river and escorted the two short visitors back to the bank.

Hal was puzzled, yet he could not help feeling that there was something familiar looking about the pair. Certainly, somewhere he had heard the speaker's voice inside the hut. That soft, slow purring . . .

CHAPTER XXVII

AND THEN . . .

HAL went back to his hammock without having come to any definite decision. After all, it was difficult to distinguish one's voice through layers of mud and thatch, especially when one was talking at a low pitch.

The following day he had breakfast with Felice. Her grandfather, she explained, lay abed late because of his age. She seemed gay and carefree as she spoke and it was hard for Hal to believe that he had seen her so tense and weary only the night before.

He rested some during the day, took a stroll along the river bank with Felice, and fished the rest of the day. Old Marcellus kept much to himself and seemed rather taciturn when spoken to. At dinner that evening, he did not appear.

"Grandfather is worrying about my brother, Rene," said Felice.

Hal looked across the table and smiled comfortingly.

"Aw, I guess he can take care of himself, huh? I'll admit I was worried too, but since I know he's your brother and have heard what a 'rep' he's got, I have the idea that he can take care of himself."

"I know he can take care of himself," Felice said thoughtfully, "but we aren't always the master of a situation. Rene is sometimes headstrong."

"Gol darn it," Hal said, noticing the sadness in her gray eyes, "I do believe you're worried about him."

"I really am, Mr. Hal. You see he's never kept us waiting so long. He's always so concerned about Grandfather and me. Really he's been all that's helped me to bear this lonely existence. I couldn't bear anything to happen to him."

"But my goodness, Miss Felice, I'm certain nothing has happened to him if he's such a roamer as you've told me! Please don't worry! If there's anything I can do . . ."

"You liked him, didn't you, Mr. Hal?" she asked suddenly.

"I'll say I did," Hal answered readily. "I

thought he was one swell chap. Man, he's the kind I like—you know, plain but not stupid."

Felice seemed relieved. She smiled sweetly and freely then.

"I thought that a nice person like you couldn't help liking Rene. You're so much alike—loyal."

"Thanks, Miss Felice. I'll always try to live up to that reputation."

"Is it a promise?" she asked eagerly.

"Cross my heart and hope to die!"

They were gay after that and strolled about the clearing in the moonlight before they said goodnight. Hal walked on air to his little hut and was so thoughtful that he climbed into his hammock with his clothes on.

But it was just as well, for he hadn't any desire to sleep and was up again in a few moments. How could he sleep when a lovely girl like Felice exacted a promise from him to be loyal? He'd be loyal to her whole family just to see her smile!

Suddenly it occurred to him that her request for his loyalty was not only meaningless but odd. What did she want him to be loyal to? To whom? He felt silly when he thought that he had made a promise when he didn't know

what it was all about. Still, he could stand feeling silly where Felice was concerned.

He stamped out a half-smoked cigarette and walked out into the clearing. It was a lovely night, breathless and clear, with just enough moon for shadow. Before he realized it, he was down at the river, gazing dreamily at the swiftly moving water.

Suddenly he heard the unmistakable sound of a canoe paddling toward him. Instinctively, he drew back under the tree, barely escaped stepping on a peacefully sleeping snake, and in trying to sidestep it, he slipped and rolled down the bank into some thick bushes. And there he stayed.

The canoe had already come into view and the bent forms of the two paddlers were directing its course toward the bank. Straight to the settlement it glided, like some long, graceful snake.

Hal held his breath as it pushed into the bank. He dared not stir the bushes for so much as a peek then. They were too close at hand. But then he had no need to see, for they started to speak and he could listen.

They talked in Portuguese, however, speaking in soft tones. Both voices struck Hal im-

mediately as being familiar—the one especially so. But still he dared not stir, for he knew that they had not gotten out of the canoe. Then after a moment of silence, the familiar voice spoke in English.

"There is gold here—I feel it," it whispered. "We must get these Pembertons away—no? It would be ver' easy. The *Pallidas,* they perhaps kill Señor Pemberton, Junior. Why not make it look as if they do it again, eh? Why not, Pizella?"

"Si, Señor," came the answer. "Why not so?"

CHAPTER XXVIII

HE WHO RISKS NOTHING

"QUEM *nao arrisca nao ganha,*" said Señor Goncalves, twisting at his moustache. He chuckled softly. "Tomorrow night, perhaps?"

"Si, Señor," said Pizella in a whisper. *Quem nao arrisca nao ganha.*"

Suddenly the swish of paddles sounded and, with a creaking noise, the canoe pushed out of the clay and back into the stream. Hal held his breath listening for them to reveal something more but not a word did they speak until they put a great deal of distance between themselves and the settlement.

Hal crawled out of the bushes, wiped his hands on his handkerchief and scrambled up the bank. He made no effort to conceal himself but walked with determined step past the Pemberton hut. A flickering light showed someone to still be up.

"That you, Miss Felice?" Hal asked anxiously.

"Yes, Mr. Hal." Her small, slim body framed the doorway. "Why, I thought you went to bed an hour ago!"

"I thought you did too!"

"Yes, but I was restless."

"Same here. Your grandfather asleep?"

"Yes. Why?"

"Nothing. Say, I was wondering what *quem nao arrisca nao ganha* means! Can you tell me?"

"He who risks nothing, gains nothing," she answered promptly. "Where did you hear it, Mr. Hal?"

"Oh, from two Brazil-nuts." He laughed. "How near are we to the next settlement and how many people live there?"

She laughed softly.

"Of all the questions! But to answer them —we live just twenty miles away from the next settlement and there's a tribe of about fifty Betoya Indians living there. They're better left alone though, if you're thinking of trying to promote good will. Some Brazilian rubber men mistreated them not so long ago and they're anything but in a conciliatory frame of mind."

"Well, I won't add to their worry then,"

Hal said, feeling rather depressed. "How long does it take to get to *Manaos?*"

"Two long days. It depends on the skill of the paddler. Sometimes it takes longer, but certainly it's not less than that. Are you thinking of leaving us, Mr. Hal?" she asked wistfully.

"Nope, not yet. In fact, I'm not going until you see or get some word from your brother."

"Oh, you're kind, Mr. Hal! Awfully kind."

"Not kind—*human,*" Hal laughed. "I have a weakness for human beings too."

"I'm glad, for we need someone with that kind of weakness. But you seem a little—well, serious. What is it?"

"Your brother, Miss Felice. I don't want to seem snoopy, but I'd like seriously to see him and talk to him. That's why I don't want you to feel offended if I ask you what idea you have of his whereabouts?"

"Why, er—Mr. Hal," said Old Marcellus, rising out of the doorway in a faded dressing gown and an air of injury. "Isn't this rather a late hour for you to be talking to my . . ."

"It makes not the slightest difference whom I talk to, Mr. Pemberton," Hal interposed

pleasantly. "In fact, I think it would be better for you to be here. You heard my question about your grandson?"

"Yes, sir, I did," said the old man with some show of dignity.

"Then you can answer it."

"Suppose I refuse?"

"That would be absurd. After all, I want to know only to help you and Miss Felice."

"Something's happened—*something!*" Felice gave a little cry. "What is it, Mr. Hal?"

"I hadn't meant to tell you, but I suppose it's the only way to do. After all, you know this country and I don't. It's simply this—not ten minutes ago while I was hidden in the bushes down at the river I overheard a conversation between that cat Goncalves and his boy friend, Pizella. It seems he has in his mind some plan to drive you people out of here. He said he felt that there was gold and he was going to get it."

"Never; not over my dead body!" said Old Marcellus stiffening to his full height. "If there's gold here, we'll get it, not Carlo Goncalves!"

"I hope to tell you," Hal agreed vehemently. "But to get to the bottom of this—what is it

all about? I don't mean to pry, but I want to help you people. I won't stand by and see that little Brazil-nut misuse you!"

"He is a bad lot, Goncalves," said Old Marcellus more to himself than to Hal. "And Pizella too."

"I could have told you that weeks ago," Hal said. "But evidently Goncalves got started when he heard your story from the captain of the boat. He was one of the listeners. He probably is one of those fools who thinks that all he has to do is to pull up at some river bank and he'll find gold. Gold isn't found as easily as that. Anyway, Mr. Pemberton, you people know him, huh? He's on a friendly footing here?"

"We know him, but not because we want to," said the old man between tightly drawn lips. "He's lately happened—to come here. . . ."

"Now you're holding back something, Mr. Pemberton. And there's absolutely no need to. Nothing you say shall be held against you." He laughed gently. "I mean it, even if my uncle is on the government's side. I know that in some mysterious way you people are connected with the revolutionary move-

ment here. You wouldn't know Goncalves from Adam if you weren't."

Felice, who had been standing silent throughout this recital, suddenly put her hand on Hal's arm.

"You are right about us, Mr. Hal," she said. "We are sort of connected with Ceara's side. That is . . ."

"Ceara's a patriot and devoted to the *Cause,*" said the old man suddenly. "Goncalves is a sneak and is in the *Cause* for greed rather than patriotic motives. I've suspected that right along. Also he wants power."

"We meant it when we said that we thought he was inhuman for what he tried to do to you," said Felice angrily. "We told him so too! But he would go to any ends to get the rest of the munitions through. He wants to start fighting. He's jealous of Ceara—he's jealous of my . . ."

"Your brother, huh?" Hal interposed. "Wasn't that what you were going to say?"

Felice and her grandfather nodded.

"I don't know why we let you know so much," she said, trying to smile.

"You know why?" Hal asked. "Because you know in your heart I'd rather help than

anything else. Besides I promised I'd be loyal, didn't I? Well, I mean it. And I can understand how people all alone like you are can mix up with the *Cause* as you call it. You have nothing else to do in this wilderness. Also, I understand now how your brother could get into it. It's a wonder he didn't get into worse mischief than this with so much time on his hands."

"You know then that Rene is . . ."

"*Renan,*" Hal interposed smiling. "I guessed it quite a few hours ago."

CHAPTER XXIX

A SNOOPING YANKEE

"RENAN CARMICHAEL PEMBERTON, that is his full name," said Old Marcellus proudly. "We've always called him Rene for short. But what are you going to do about him, Mr. Hal? You are loyal to your government as well as to us, eh?"

"I think," said Hal with a smile at Felice, "that I can dope out a way to be loyal to both. Just one thing I'd like to find out though—was he in on that plane plot?"

"I can vouch for him that he wasn't," Felice said stoutly. "I don't think Rene ever met that José Rodriguez before in his life. There are many in the *Cause,* you know. They can't all be acquainted. It was just a coincidence."

"I'm inclined to believe it. Well, what do you say we all turn in? We may not get such a good sleep tomorrow night."

They all agreed and Hal was about to go when he thought of something.

"How about guns, Mr. Pemberton?" he asked the old man. "Have you anything like that around here?"

The old man said he had. Enough to protect themselves for a little while. And Goncalves, he was certain, was acting upon his own initiative. Ceara, he declared, would have no part in such a scheme.

"I hope so," Hal said aloud when he got into his hammock a moment later. "It would pain me to know that Ceara did anything like that after all the puffs he's been given!" He chuckled, then looked grave the next minute.

He was thinking about Renan—*Rene,* and did not know which name he preferred. He did know, however, that he thought the Pembertons a queer lot. Somehow their connection with the *Cause* amused him, and he wondered if they, too, could not see the humorous side of it. Renan must certainly see it. Laughter and smuggled munitions!

Hal realized after a while, however, that there was not so much to laugh at with Goncalves. He presented a problem grave enough to make one frown. Meanwhile the time was

fleeing and before they knew it, the Señor would be paying them a visit.

His mind was so full of this worry that he slept but little and got up at dawn. After dressing he hurried down to the river bank to think it over, and in his nervous deliberation he pulled out of his pocket the handkerchief which he had had with him the night before.

It felt gritty to the touch, and when he went to put it up to his face a light-colored substance fell from it to the ground. It interested him greatly.

Hal examined it curiously, particularly the few particles that clung to the handkerchief. Then he bethought himself of how, the night before, he had slid down the sloping embankment and into the bushes to avoid the canoeists. That was where he had wiped the wet clay from his hands.

He shook his head uncertainly and slid down the embankment again. There he delved about, poking into the embankment and eagerly scrutinizing every bit of clay that came out in his hand. In several places he did this until he espied his footsteps in the wet earth. Almost covering them was some more clay which he had loosened in his fall.

He searched through it carefully and finally brought up a handful of the yellow dust which he scooped up immediately. Then he scrambled up the bank and across the clearing, almost running into Old Marcellus as he came out of his door.

"G'd mornin', young sir. You seem to have been as restless as myself," said the old man.

"Looks that way all right," Hal said, hardly able to contain himself. "But it's a good thing I was restless. I think, Mr. Pemberton, that I've discovered something."

"What is that, young man?"

"Gold," Hal answered, smiling. "A whole handkerchief full!"

"Great Scott!" exclaimed the astonished old man.

"Mr. Pemberton," Hal said whimsically, opening the handkerchief for his delighted inspection, "that expression you just used—*Great Scott!*—is uttered by Americans only. Do you know that? What's more it's a purely Yankee term and yet you use it!"

"I wouldn't stand for that insult, young man," said Old Marcellus with a faint gleam of mirth in his weak blue eyes, "if it wasn't that you've discovered my gold."

"Then you admit that you've given praise to a Yankee by using his name?" Hal teased. "You've committed the unpardonable sin, Mr. Pemberton."

"Then I have," said the old man, biting back the smile that wanted to shine on his thin, haggard face. "And I'm not denying now that it took a snooping Yankee to find our gold—the gold that will mean so much to my grandchildren."

"Well," Hal laughed, "I'd rather be a snooping Yankee than . . ."

"Than what?" the old man promptly asked.

"Than Señor Carlo Goncalves," Hal answered with a chuckle.

CHAPTER XXX

PALE DEATH

IT RAINED terrifically that night, lashing this way and that through the clearing. Truly, it was a night to deter the most venturesome, but as Hal had high regard for Señor Goncalves as a moving force, he did not keep to his hut and hammock. Instead, with Joaquim's invaluable aid and two Colt revolvers, they kept vigil under a tree at the river.

"You heard Señor Goncalves say he come tonight, Señor Hal?" Joaquim asked.

"Exactly," Hal answered. "I think he meant to do it last night, but he didn't have the nerve. He said something about making it look as if the Indians had done it—the *Pallidas!* Do you think it was they who killed Mr. Pemberton's son?"

Joaquim shrugged his broad shoulders.

"*Pallidas* think evil spirits get out when white man digs deep in the ground, Señor. They would kill him for that maybe. *Palli-*

das hate Señor Pemberton for chasing them from settlement. Maybe they kill—we do not know."

"And what do you think about Señor Rene, Joaquim?"

"I think, like master, that maybe Señor Rene is being punished for angry talk about you falling in plane. I think Ceara he hold him there a time so he will not talk."

"So you and Mr. Pemberton think Señor Renan didn't like the treatment I got, huh? Well, maybe it's so. At least I like to think that that's the sort of a bird he is."

Joaquim nodded as if to say that Renan Pemberton was exactly that kind. Be that as it may, thinking was often convincing to Hal and he had no further qualms in that direction. His present anxiety was on the river and from time to time he wondered just what Goncalves had in his mind.

He did not have very long to wonder, however, for, just before midnight, Joaquim prodded Hal gently in the ribs.

"Canoe she come," he muttered between his teeth. "We keep back in dark."

"I'll say we will," Hal whispered in return.

The canoe swished through the water and

presently appeared just below the settlement. There seemed to be no other boats with them, and Hal and the Indian exchanged glances of satisfaction. Goncalves, sitting smug and content while Pizella slaved at the paddle, seemed to sense nothing unusual.

Hal noticed immediately that Pizella was carrying a bow, and arrows were lying at his feet. When he pushed the boat into the embankment and got out with his bare feet to make it fast he reached for them. Goncalves smiled.

"*Pallidas*—si?" he murmured.

"Si," responded Pizella.

"Not so fast, Goncalves!" Hal roared in a voice that sounded almost sepulchral, coming as it did from under the rain-dripping trees. "*We've* got you covered!" He said *we've* as if it constituted a tremendous armed force.

Goncalves moved like lightning. Without a word, he shoved the boat back into the stream with the tremendous energy of his excitement. For some reason he seemed to have completely forgotten the wading half-caste who stumbled and tripped through the water in his haste to clamber back into the canoe.

Hal fired the gun then over the Brazilian's

head. But the fellow had taken up the paddle and began to stroke vigorously off in the dark. Pizella meanwhile had neither been able to gain the canoe or even keep up with him. Also, it was apparent that the water was too high for him to wade any longer.

He called frantically to Goncalves, called to him to wait, Joaquim said. But as Hal had already aimed another bullet at the Brazilian's sleek head, there was no apparent slowing up of the canoe for anything or anybody. Consequently, Pizella dove into the high water, clothes and all.

Hal tried another shot but the darkness and the swiftly moving canoe made a sure aim impossible. He thought he heard Goncalves scream after a fourth shot had been fired, but as Pizella was screaming also, they could not be certain. Be that as it may, the Brazilian kept right on paddling and was soon out of sight.

Pizella was in a dilemma, to be sure. He could not hope to reach his master's canoe and he was afraid to return toward shore, where goodness knows what horrible fate awaited him. Hal felt almost sorry for him in that moment, for Goncalves' desertion of the half-

caste at such a time and in such a place seemed heartless.

But Pizella seemed to have chosen the lesser of two evils and turning his back upon the raging current began to swim toward shore. Hal and Joaquim watched him, interested, each thinking that the man was braver than his master ever dared to be.

In the midst of these reflections, they heard him suddenly shriek, a blood-curdling yelp. He was by that time, too, near enough in to stand on his feet, which he did. But even as they watched him they saw him raise his arms and sort of stiffen from head to foot. The next second he had plunged headfirst back into the stream.

"Electric fish, Señor—he bite Pizella!" Joaquim shouted.

Hal got to his feet ready to jump in after the half-caste, but the Indian put out a detaining arm and pointed to the dark waters.

"Already he sink," said Joaquim. "Señor no can find now."

Hal looked, feeling not a little dazed by the episode and saw that it was true. The water rushing along on its heedless course had car-

ried the half-caste completely out of sight. There was not a sign of him.

"Joaquim say right—no?" said the Indian.

"Too right," Hal answered thoughtfully. "I can't seem to gather my wits together and remember how it all happened."

"That is because the *Pallida Mors* she is swift, Señor Hal. Like that she grabs and then we look—*no more!* The Indian he say she wants all the time death. So many drown in her, Señor. She look like death—no? She pale for rushing river."

"She is pale," Hal agreed. Even in the darkness her pallid yellowish waters gleamed eerily. He shuddered and turned his broad back upon the stream. "This pale death business is getting on my nerves, anyway."

CHAPTER XXXI

A DECISION

AFTER a long, solemn conference in the Pemberton hut next morning, it was decided that Goncalves had been effectually squelched by the ruse which Hal had so cleverly executed. None of them anticipated a return visit from the Brazilian with such a purpose in mind. Old Marcellus felt confident that they were safe from like marauders.

"But it's time we heard from Rene," said the old man. "Besides, somebody ought to put word in General Ceara's ear about Señor Goncalves."

"How about me going?" Hal asked more in fun than anything. "I'm sure Ceara would receive me as a representative of the Pemberton family, wouldn't he?"

"I don't know why he wouldn't," Felice said, pursing her full red lips thoughtfully. "Grandfather couldn't stand the journey, even if it is only a five-hour paddle, and Joaquim

couldn't satisfactorily interpret a message. I'm out of the question in a revolutionary camp, so you are the only solution. Joaquim can go with you, Mr. Hal. If you start now you'll be back tonight before midnight."

"Suits me," Hal said gaily. "I'll be tickled pink to pike a revolutionary camp. Only you're sure they won't nab me in, huh?"

"General Ceara's a very just man, Hal," Old Marcellus assured him. "I shall give you a letter of introduction to him, telling him that I can vouch for your secrecy."

"How about Goncalves—he might be so sore at me that he'll try and whoop up things a bit, huh?"

"General Ceara's long been provoked with him, Hal," said Felice, unconsciously using the young man's Christian name too. "He'll give your complaints just consideration."

"As you say, *Felice,*" Hal countered, smiling. "I'm to tell him then what greedy eyes the Brazil-nut has cast on your gold hills, huh? And it goes without saying, that I'll tell him word for word about last night."

"Of course—don't forget that important part. General Ceara is too much of a patriot

not to see that Goncalves is not a man for the *Cause.*"

"I agree with you, Felice," Hal said whimsically. "He'd be the cause of any *Cause* busting up."

They talked over the question of food to be taken on the trip, and while Old Marcellus was writing his letters, they summoned Joaquim and made known to him what was required. Then just before noon Felice came down to the river and helped push them off.

"Don't get nervous, Hal," she called. "Your letter to Ceara will explain everything."

"Even that it's not my fault that my uncle's a secret service man, hunting for your brother?" Hal laughed.

"Of course," she said, giggling merrily. "Your uncle's not going to hunt for Rene after you get back to *Manaos,* is he?"

"Not if I can see Rene first and Unk next. Those two will compromise and I don't mean maybe."

"Indeed they will." She waved a dainty handkerchief toward the departing canoe and smiled sweetly. "Be sure that Rene gets the other letter, Hal! I do hope he's there all

right. He's got to know we've struck gold at last. And because of you."

"Don't thank me, Lady Felice. It was a mere accident. Really, Goncalves ought to get the credit for that."

She shook her head, trying to look severe at Hal's raillery, but in the end she smiled and called a warning to the Indian to be careful of the river. Then when the canoe glided swiftly out of sight of the settlement, she called, "Adios, Hal! I'll see you tonight."

"Adios, yourself, Felice!" Hal called back. "And as for tonight, that remains to be seen."

The girl laughed in answer, and Hal listened to its sad, sweet echo until the noise of the rapids deafened him.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE CORONEL GONCALVES

THEY turned off the *Pallida Mors* and into a narrower stream. Small cataracts sprayed down over rocky cliffs, sending a continuous foam over the surface of the water. On the whole, it seemed to be not so rough, and they glided along hour after hour under the beaming sun until Hal began to tire.

Joaquim's knowledge of the region was uncanny and Hal perceived, before very long, that the Indian must have made many such trips back and forth to Ceara's camp. Also, he seemed to know just to the minute when they would arrive at the lonely jungle spot.

It was middle afternoon when Hal helped Joaquim push the canoe well up into the foliage overhanging the river bank. Then they clambered up, up and, with the Indian in the lead, came to a narrow trail over which they marched for a half hour.

"Do we walk as far as we ride?" Hal asked wearily.

Joaquim shook his head.

"Soon now," he muttered. "Listen, Señor!"

A man's voice cried out sharply and Joaquim answered him quickly. Hal could see no one, but presently a rather wretched-looking young man in tattered khaki emerged from between the trees. He glanced at the newcomers suspiciously.

"He want know who come here," the Indian interpreted. "He want know what we have to show we come. I say letter from Señor Pemb."

"Righto," Hal said briskly, and took out his letters. The one addressed to General Ceara he gave to the sentry and the other he returned to his pocket.

The fellow looked at the address on the envelope, turned it every which way, then glanced at Hal suspiciously again. Finally he spoke to the Indian, talking for an interminable time. When he had finished Joaquim passed on the news.

"The General Ceara he is not here, but the sentry say come, it will be all right."

"All right by me, Joaquim old boy. Where is Ceara—out to lunch?"

The Indian shrugged his shoulders and at a gesture from the sentry they fell into a march. Hal, for some reason, felt not so comfortable about having the fellow tramping at his back with a bayonet in position. But as Joaquim seemed not to mind this military formality, he made the best of it too.

After a five-minute tramp they came suddenly out on a broad plain. Dotted about its outskirts were hundreds of small thatched huts. Men roamed about, shaggy and unkempt in their wrinkled and tattered khaki. Others lounged about on the ground before their huts and stared curiously at the newcomers.

They passed at least a half-dozen sentries before their guard commanded them to stop before a hut, much larger and more sumptuous looking than the rest. Hal decided that this must be the headquarters of the famous Ceara.

At a gesture from the guard, they were surrounded by reinforcements while he stepped inside the hut, manifestly to announce their arrival. Hours seemed to pass while they

waited and Hal exchanged several calamitous glances with Joaquim.

"Miss Felice is expecting us back before midnight," he said to the Indian once. "From the looks of things, we can't be certain which midnight."

Hal had reached the stage when he was resting first on one foot and then on the other, and neither one resting at all. The sentry at that juncture came out and once more addressed the Indian who in turn addressed his tall young charge.

"We go in," he said. "We see Coronel Goncalves, not General Ceara. Ceara he not here."

"What?" Hal asked.

But it was too late. The sentry and a rear flank fairly carried them in with occasional light proddings of their bayonets. A large, low-ceilinged room loomed up before Hal's bright blue eyes, as did the many broken-down chairs circled around a rickety table.

Behind the table Goncalves was purring and twisting his little moustache.

He smiled sardonically up to Hal's vast height and straightening his dapper little self in the chair placed his elbows upon the table.

"Ah, such a pleasure, Señor Hal!" he purred softly. "To whom do I owe it on this my first audience as Coronel of the revolutionary forces?"

Hal sent down his most brilliant smile in return.

"You don't owe it to me, Goncalves," he said with an uproarious laugh. "You owe it to Mr. Pemberton. I came to save him and his daughter the fatigue of a journey."

"I remember you were kind, Señor Hal."

"Never mind all the apple-sauce, fellow. Joaquim and I are in a hurry. My letter is for General Ceara."

"Por Deus!" said Goncalves with a mournful face. "You are but too late, Señor Hal. General Ceara has died with the fever."

Hal looked straight down into the little man's snapping eyes, and they wavered before his own steady gaze. Goncalves was lying, he knew.

"I don't believe anything of the kind, Goncalves," Hal said with startling frankness. "But, nevertheless, I can tell you what we want. *Renan!* His grandfather and sister are worried sick about him. Now don't lie about that, fellow—you can't put anything

over on me like lies—I can read them in those soul reflectors of yours. And, man, they don't add to your charms any, believe me." He laughed mockingly. "Now do I hear where Renan is or not?"

"You shall see him, Señor. *Si.* In a moment, eh? Just I want to ask you how is the fine old Señor Marcellus, eh? And the what-you-call stuck up Felice—no? Ah, she hate me. But the Coronel Goncalves does not care, Señor Hal. I get back. Si. While you and the Señor Renan are safe under guard, some *Pallidas* shall steal down upon the Pemberton granddaughter and her grandfather—no? I shall make it so. Si. The *Pallidas* they hate the Pemberton for taking their settlement from them. They think the family have evil spirits because the señorita's father dig a mine, eh? They want ver' much to rid their tribe of evil spirits, these *Pallidas,* and to kill the Pembertons they think will bring them luck."

"You're an idiot to even say such things," Hal shouted. "Your mind must be all cut up, isn't it? Who ever gave you charge of a lot of normal men anyway? An idiot bossing sane men. Well, let me tell you, Goncalves—you

lay a finger on that girl or her grandfather and your days are numbered. They're numbered anyway, as a matter of fact. Unk must be on your trail good and plenty by now . . . when you think you're fooling a Yank like Unk, you've got to go some!"

"Ah, Señor Hal. Such talk! But how will you know what the Coronel Goncalves is doing when you are no more, eh? You won't, Señor!" Suddenly the little man's face twisted in a maniacal smile. "I want that gold at Pembertons', *si?* I shall get it and no one shall be alive to know! *Cada qual por si e Deus por todos!*" he added.

Joaquim touched Hal's hand affectionately as the guards pushed him past with their bayonets.

"He say 'each for himself and God for us all,' Señor. I thought you like to know."

"Sure, thanks, Joaquim," Hal muttered breathlessly. "Looks as if we're going to be separated, huh. Well, over the river and so long, old top!"

"*Adios,* Señor Hal! *Adios!*"

Whatever became of Joaquim, Hal never knew. Suffice to say, he never again saw the kind-hearted and faithful Indian.

CHAPTER XXXIII

RENAN!

THE guards marched Hal to a hut not far from the river trail and with a push thrust him into the gloomy interior. Suddenly he felt a hand reach out and touch his shoulder.

"Keen, as I live!" cried a familiar voice.

Hal looked down, his eyes becoming accustomed to the dimness, and saw the smiling face of Rene Carmichael.

"Renan Carmichael Pemberton!" he laughed and proffering his hand gripped the other's with a hearty pressure.

"Well, I hear you've got the dope all first-hand, eh, Keen?"

"And how!" Hal laughed. "But I don't know which I like better—Rene or Renan! I'll change off to vary the monotony, huh? Just the same I'm darn glad to see you—boy, how glad!"

"And you're well and safe, eh, chappie? Heavens, but I was worried about you. I sup-

pose you thought that I didn't care what happened to you, eh?"

"Never. I just didn't know, that's all."

Renan pointed to two rickety stools. They sat down.

"Not knowing that it was a put-up job by that skunk Goncalves, I came straight here to get Ceara to help me. That's where I made my mistake, for Goncalves was here and when he heard me mention your name to the general, all was off. He accused me of being an informer to the Federals and all that sort of thing. Ceara understood that I didn't know Rodriguez from Adam and he thought it was pretty rotten work for Goncalves to do, but he couldn't say too much. He was afraid of Goncalves, that's the long and short of it. That's why he had to put me in here—he *had* to, or that little trouble maker would have gone all over this camp saying the *General* played me for a favorite—which he did."

"And here you've been ever since, huh?"

"Here I've been. But tell me about yourself?"

Hal told him briefly, yet missing no important detail, and summed it up with his singular interview with the Coronel Goncalves.

"And here I am, Rene, too. By special permission of Col. Calves Liver out there. You can be certain there are rats in his garret. He talked like a madman."

"Great Heavens, Keen! You don't think he really intends to play the *Pallidas* onto my sister and grandfather, do you? Not that!"

"Rene, I wouldn't tell you only that I think he means to do just that. I tell you the bird isn't right! He means to make short work of us, too."

Renan clenched his hands together.

"I've got friends in this outfit—all these men trust me and like me. They liked Ceara, too, but, like everyone else, they fear Goncalves like poison. But maybe I can work something, Keen. Don't get discouraged."

"I'm not, only Calves Liver told me the glad news that Ceara died of fever."

"He lied," Renan muttered darkly. "He's had the poor man shot. He was jealous of everybody. Now that he's got Ceara out of the way, and myself—he can rule. *Maybe.* We'll see, Keen—we'll see!"

"And what a mess for a couple of Americans to get into, huh? Excuse me though, Rene, I forgot."

"Don't, Keen! I rather like being taken for an American. If I had to do it all over again . . ."

"Yes?"

"Oh, I went into this more because I liked Ceara. It was fascinating and Grandfather talked radically to me. I got to think we were abused, but now I see differently—I have ever since I met you on the field that day. I got to realize that we Civil War refugees are nothing but a lot of soreheads and anything but a sporting lot. Our grandparents and great-grandparents who are responsible for bringing us down to this desolate corner of the world weren't big enough to stay on in the South and come up smiling like the rest. Oh, how I see it! We've been brought up on bitterness and prejudice and our terrible poverty's made us think even worse things about this land of our adoption. But no more. If I ever get out of here I'm going to the Brazilian Government and get down on my knees for forgiveness. Goncalves has made me see what a pack of fools we are. What does he care about political freedom or a square deal for the jungle plantation owner? Not a darn thing. Goncalves is rooting for Goncalves!"

"Rene, you're simply great! My uncle would be tickled pink to hear that kind of talk. I do believe you'd be given a full pardon by both governments if you'd only tell who the munitions manufacturers are from whom Ceara got his stuff."

"I couldn't tell you from Adam, Keen. That's the work Goncalves did. He used my name, that's all. So I got the credit for it, eh? No, what I did was to run up and down the jungle for recruits, that's all. Now you've heard it all."

"Well, my story is that, if we get out of here, the most sensible thing for you to do is to get that mine working and see that your kid sister lives in a country where she's going to be healthy. I never saw anybody so sad—honest!"

"I know it—I know it, Hal. And I will! I'll see that I do! Tonight! We'll get out of here somehow!"

And somehow they did!

CHAPTER XXXIV

A FEAR

HAL was witness to a miracle that midnight. It was one of those rare occasions when a vast body of men are all inspired with one thought, one motive at one time. And Renan, that friend of all men, achieved it.

It began in the early evening with the sentry guarding their hut. Renan whispered to him what horrors the self-styled Coronel was planning for the Pemberton family that evening and what extreme measures would have to be taken to prevent death and destruction.

Toward mid-evening, after Coronel Goncalves left the camp with a picked guard, word had gone around to every man. By midnight they were all assembled to carry out a common purpose, Hal and Renan in the lead.

A half hour later a line of dark canoes glided silently and swiftly through the water. Overhead, the stars gleamed and from the surrounding jungle strange noises came and went.

Now and again the men muttered softly, but on the whole there was a deep silence.

After an interminable time they reached the *Pallida Mors* and Hal heard Renan sigh with relief.

"Not so long now," he said gravely. "If only . . ."

"Hope for the best, Rene," Hal said comfortingly.

But the best was not pleasant, for when they sailed through the dawn and into the settlement, there was naught but charred bits of thatched huts to tell the tale. Overhead, the sky was black with vultures.

Renan sickened at the sight, but Hal kept up and searched every inch of the place. The Indian servants had expired, each with a fancy poisoned arrow in his heart. But of Felice and her grandfather there was not a sign.

"We're going up to pay the *Pallidas* a visit, Rene," Hal said darkly. "And unless they cut short their ceremonies we ought to be on time."

"You may be right about it, Hal," Renan said anxiously. "I know they're hours sometimes with those ceremonies for driving out

the evil spirits. Perhaps poor Felice and Grandfather . . ."

"Might be the cause of future happiness," Hal said, trying to be as cheerful as he could. "Sometimes things *do* happen for the best, even when they look to be their worst."

"These *Pallida* Indians are the worst of their kind, Hal," Renan reminded him. "Their superstitions are limitless."

"I know. I've given quite a lot of thought to this so-called *Phantom of Death River.*"

"The jaguar in whom my father's supposed to have been reincarnated?"

"Yes," Hal answered thoughtfully. "They were pretty tricky thinking that up. But do you know what, Rene? I think that they made it up to keep people from getting too snoopy about that poor wretch in the hut."

"The demented native?"

"Native?" Hal returned. "Listen, Rene—I heard that supposed native cry right near me and it didn't sound any more native than you do. That wretch had the cry of a white man, not a native."

"Hal!"

"Yes. Believe it or not. They even tried to make me believe those cries were from the

jaguar, but I know what I heard. It was a white man's cry."

"Why didn't you say so before?"

"Because I couldn't quite bring myself to thinking that such a horrible thought could be true. Besides, Felice assured me that it was a native and consequently none of the white man's concern. But somehow yesterday and today—especially after I talked with Calves Liver this afternoon, I figured it out. It's been going on for ten years, hasn't it, Rene?"

"Yes, as far as we know. That's about the time we got wind of the story."

"And, Rene, I hope it's just an hallucination, but your father . . . he's been gone ten years . . ."

"Great Heavens, Hal! Why . . . it couldn't be . . . yet . . . it's just ten years!"

CHAPTER XXXV

A PHANTOM OF HOPE

THE massacre of the *Pallidas* will come down in history, for a massacre it was. Renan and Hal leading the rebel volunteers were met that morning with a rain of poisoned arrows issuing from every conceivable bit of foliage on the banks of the settlement. War cries trembled in the air, shrieks of women and children.

Hal was stunned by it for a moment, but an arrow skimming off his tanned arm brought him to action. He leaped out of the canoe with Renan, pulling back the trigger of his gun with every step they took up the bank. Behind them came the rebels, shouting as they ran forward.

It was the work of minutes, but Hal lived a lifetime and he could see by Renan's haggard face that he did also. And when the smoke cleared away they ran for the deserted *maloka,* deserted, save for Felice and her grandfather,

who had been tied to the pillars, preparatory to making the supreme sacrifice for their companionship with the evil spirits.

The white men had come none too soon, she told them when she had regained her composure. And in a few words she explained how the *Pallidas* had descended upon her and her grandfather and carried them off to their settlement. Goncalves had been with them, but what became of him she did not know.

Hal led the men on the next inspection, an inspection which he instinctively feared the results of. But Renan urged him on, asking him to go first and see if their worst fears were well-founded.

Unfortunately, they were.

No sound greeted Hal as he walked ahead of the men. Not even a whisper greeted him as he stepped into the gloom of the hut. All was still as the tomb and a tomb it was indeed! For the withered remnants of a white man lay silent in death.

Hal brought out with him a notebook, yellowed with age and soiled. Every page of it was written on, some of the writing rational and legible, and other pages scribbled on in moments of frenzy and despair. Taken as a

whole, it depicted a man tortured by constant confinement and lost hope.

"For me, Hal?" Renan asked as Hal handed it to him. He took it, with white face and trembling hands.

"It's addressed to you, Rene. Good heavens, I'd rather spare you . . ."

Renan bent his head and read with misty eyes. Hal had glanced over the first few heart-breaking pages when he picked it up in the hut. He could even memorize a few of the lines, so vividly had they stood out before his eyes.

"They captured me that morning," it read, "and I guess it was because they were superstitious about the lode. Also because it was on their former settlement. . . . They were getting ready to offer me as a sacrifice to clear out the evil spirits, when I happened to think that they were superstitious about killing a demented man. . . . I saved myself but condemned myself to eternal death and suffering. They locked me up and here I've been except for occasional nights when I managed to get as far as the door and cry for help . . . but no one came, except for that red-headed young man. They had bound and gagged me while

he was here. That is why he didn't understand me when I cried . . . hope went then . . . my son Rene, my girl Felice, my father . . . oh, that we had never come to this wretched country . . . I've feigned madness so long, I'm going mad now . . . I'm gone. . . ."

The pathos of that last line dwelt in Hal's memory. He knew he'd never forget it. And worse, he could never banish from his mind the picture of despair and lost hope which Marcellus Pemberton, Junior, bore even unto death.

CHAPTER XXXVI

ADIOS!

Two weeks later, Hal was sitting with his uncle, under the cooling shade of a palm tree. It was early afternoon and most of *Manaos* was under cover for the siesta period. A light breeze blew and though it was a warm day they felt not uncomfortable.

Hal had just come in on one of the up-river boats that morning. He had shaved, gotten a hair cut, and blossomed forth with his relative in an immaculate suit of flannels. A pair of sport shoes covered his sturdy feet and for the first time in a month he felt clean and utterly at peace with all the world.

"This has been the first chance we've had to talk, Hal, do you realize that?" Denis Keen reminded him.

"I've been too busy taking off my jungle coat," Hal laughed. "But what do you want to know that I didn't write you?"

"Well, for one thing, I'm interested to know what that poor devil Pemberton died

of. You just wrote that he was dead when you found him."

"And that's all I can tell you, Unk," Hal said earnestly. "We couldn't find a mark or scratch on him anywhere, so I guess a doctor would say it was from natural causes. I'd call it a broken heart."

"No doubt, poor fellow. It's the saddest thing I ever heard of. Still, those benighted *Pallidas* didn't know any better. You say they were almost wiped out?"

"Sure, we had to. They rained poisoned arrows on us like as if it was snowing. Some of the older warriors and the women and the children escaped into the jungle. They won't be seen for many a year, believe me. But didn't those rebel boys work! Gosh, they were aces high, Renan included."

"I'm glad for their sakes. Your friend Rene's, too. Today's paper said they were all to be fully pardoned by the government."

"And by that same token your case is knocked in the head, huh, Unk?"

"Of course. The *Cause* just simply isn't any more. Thanks to Renan. He's quite a hero to Brazil, I guess."

"He'd be an asset to any country, Unk. The

U. S. will be proud to have him back. Felice, also."

"You mean especially Felice, eh?"

"Aw now, Unk, don't rub it in. Old Marcellus isn't to be left out either. He's like a kid going away to the country for the first time."

Denis Keen puffed leisurely on his cigarette.

"We'll have quite a full house on the boat then, eh?"

"I'll say we will."

"And despite the tragedies, there'll be a lot living happily ever after."

"You tell 'em, Unk."

"The mists have cleared away and even the worst of your experiences will be softened by the time you get home. Time is something to be thankful for, Hal. At least you have found out everything you wanted to find out, eh? All except Goncalves. It is a mystery where he ever disappeared to."

Hal shook back a lock of hair and smiled.

"Not a mystery to me, Unk. I wouldn't be the least surprised to find out that Señor Goncalves turns out to be the Phantom of Death River!"

THE END

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